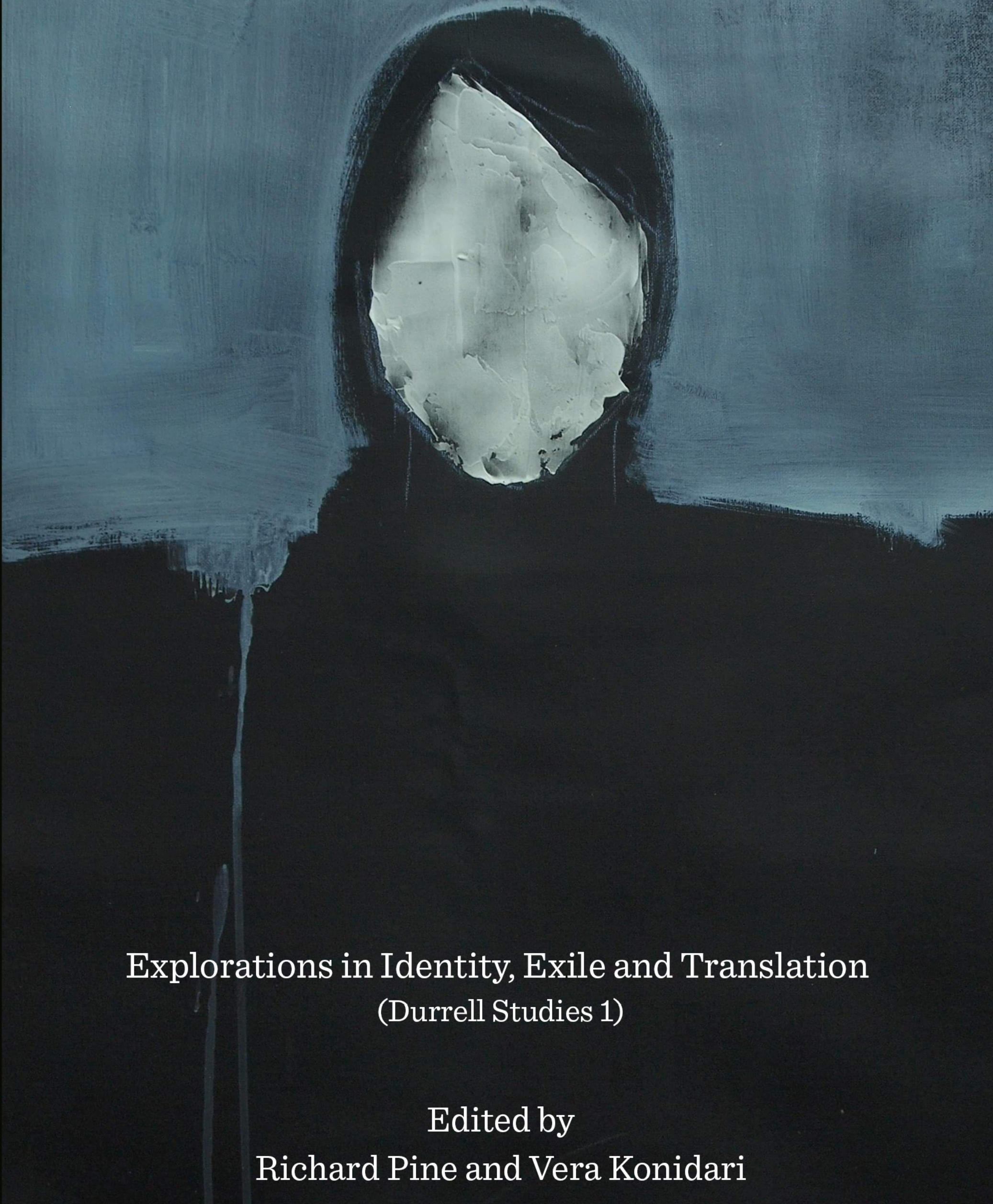
Borders and Borderlands



Explorations in Identity, Exile and Translation

(Durrell Studies 1)

Edited by

Richard Pine and Vera Konidari

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EDITORS' PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2005 the Durrell School of Corfu hosted a seminar on the theme "Borders and Borderlands". Its "Call for Papers" offered the following topics:

> Borders are spatial, conceptual, spiritual and psychological and shape the dynamics of identity, community, and governance. Territorial borders are receiving renewed attention in this era of transnational mobility and globalised cultures. As a construction of history, psychology, law and politics, borders are often represented in symbolic form as transitions and rites of passage.
>
> The creation and defence of borders, for example in defining the nation-state, involve both inclusion and exclusion, invasion and enlargement, and pose questions about political, cultural and personal identity. Knowledge, power, *anomie* and xenophobia are intimately associated with these processes.
>
> Arrival at a border raises issues such as cultural negotiation, and confrontation with otherness.
>
> The crossing of borders affects meaning, perception of landscape and sense of identity.
>
> Translation involves the crossing of linguistic boundaries as meaning leaves the homeland of one language and enters that of another.

The motivation for the seminar came from the School's accumulated experience of hosting meetings on globalisation, nationalism, translation and the obstacles to mutual understanding.

At that time, it could not be foreseen that the refugee phenomenon in the Mediterranean would reach today's crisis level; the international economic collapse of 2010 had yet to bring Europe's, and in particular Greece's, economies to their knees; and while the issue of borders in the

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Middle East was acute, it had not intensified to the extent that we see today in Syria or Kurdistan or the ongoing paradox of divided Cyprus.

Nevertheless, the seminar attracted contributions as diverse as Panayiota Mini's discussion of the condition of Pontic Greeks as portrayed in Constantinos Giannaris's *From the Edge of the City*, and David Newman's "The lines that continue to separate us: borders in our 'borderless' world" (which was published in *Nostos: proceedings 2002-2005*).

The Durrell Library of Corfu (successor to the Durrell School) recognised that the issues discussed in 2005 have been exacerbated by a succession of international events – war, worldwide financial and political instability, Brexit, and the factors mentioned above, with repercussions throughout the Balkans, the Middle East and in Greece itself. We therefore decided to host another symposium on "Borders and Borderlands", which has given rise to the present volume.

Not the least of these events – in this case almost unforeseeable in late 2019, when we were at an advanced stage of planning – was the Covid-19 pandemic which in fact caused us, first, to postpone, and finally to cancel, the symposium. The decision to cancel was taken in tandem with an equally resolute decision to publish the "proceedings" of what was, in effect, a non-event. This book is, however, decidedly, an "event" celebrating an absence of gathered friends and making available the wisdoms and enthusiasms which they would have brought to Corfu in 2020.

Along the way, we lost some would-be participants, whose academic commitments – due especially to the novel experience of accustoming themselves to remote teaching – prevented them from completing their essays.

When we initially invited contributions, we anticipated submissions on topics including migration across political borders, and translation between languages. We were gratified to receive not only predictable responses, but a level of discussion which transcended the factual and critical analyses of texts and scenarios. This continues to delight and surprise us, confirming as it does the need for a wide-ranging, inter-disciplinary gathering of essays and personal testimonies, which address not only literature, politics and history but also – and this we find particularly stimulating – first-person narratives of transitions between cultures, mindsets and polities.

The "Personal Witness" section offers compelling evidence of the vulnerability of identity in the testimonies of Mohamad Omari and Scott Manning Stevens, and the analysis of refugee narratives by Sandra Mateus and Paulo Santos, together with Blanka Čechová's brief summary of her

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work as an international jurist in Kosovo which is at the same time tragic and satiric.

We also decided to create a special section devoted to "The Poetry of Exile", which is also a form of personal testimony – by poets in wartime Egypt (1945) and today. Initially, we had planned a performance of Lawrence Durrell's poem "In Europe", with its refrain "We are getting the refugee habit", which Durrell had in fact intended to be spoken to a musical accompaniment; this would have involved music students at the Ionian University in a world première of the poem in performance; this, too, fell foul of the pandemic, but we decided to include the poem in company with "Anatolia", by Durrell's friend from the Cairo days, Elie Papadimitriou, which depicts the destruction of ethnic Greek society in Anatolia in 1922 and the consequent compulsory border-crossing which led, fortuitously and miraculously, to the development of *rebetika* music, as discussed here by Gail Holst-Warhaft.

We have been extremely moved by the many sensitive approaches by our contributors to their subjects of specialised interests. Borders, and more particularly borderlands, are the experience of so many writers discussed here, the in-between spaces where writing and thinking take place. In addition to the participants in "Personal Witness", there is an aspect of the essays by Katarzyna Szmigiero on "madness narratives" and Eeva-Liisa Myllymäki's on "the semantic sphere" which bring scientific and humanitarian concepts into the same frame of reference cogently and evocatively. The essay by Melek Chekili on "untranslatability" is particularly effective in highlighting the borderland in which translation so often finds itself; again, she achieves this in a style which is both effective and affective.

We have been gratified by the intuition and empathy which pervades the essays by Michalis Sarlis, Katherine Cooklin, Hedwig Schwall and Ian MacNiven, taking their care for borders and borderlands in four disparate disciplines beyond their specific topics.

The six essays on "Literature and Identity" express both the anguish and the triumph of an art form that takes the reader's concern beyond the individual authors discussed by Benjamin Keatinge, Manal Khan, Sirshendu Majumdar, Anissa Talahite-Moodley, Michael Davros and Harriet Induni, into the ubiquitous *topos* of the writer as witness and the writer in search of identity.

Our own essays are intended as to be both theoretical and practical in their application to film (Konidari) and the uses and status of metaphor (Pine).

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we are grateful to all our contributors, some of whom undertook their essays in conditions previously unexperienced and unforeseen. It has been a privilege to work with them in composing this book.

We also thank the Society of Corfiot Studies and the staff of the Solomos Museum (the cherished venue for our intended symposium) for their hospitality and co-operation at the planning stages and, we hope, for future events which can be more than theoretical or aspirational.

For advice and assistance (in locating copyright holders and in many other ways), we thank Lia Manessi; Pavla Smetánová; Bruce Redwine; Barnaby Rogerson of Eland Publishing, publishers of Robin Fedden; Neni Panourgiá of Columbia University and Kostis Karpozilos of Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI) Athens, for information regarding Elie Papadimitriou; and, as always, Roderick Beaton.

We are grateful to Frances Fedden and Kathrine Fedden for permission to include “The Anatomy of Exile” by their father, Robin Fedden; to the Estate of Lawrence Durrell for permission to include Lawrence Durrell’s poem “In Europe”; to Lena Savvidis and Manolis Savvidis for permission to include “Anatolia” by Elie Papadimitriou; and to Kapka Kassabova for permission to include her poems from *Someone else’s life*.

Cover image: *Nomad in No Man's Land* by Kostas Papavlasopoulos

We selected this contemporary painting by a Greek artist because *Nomad in No Man's Land* suggests to us not only the primary image of the “faceless” person without identity which dominates in the foreground, hinting at all nameless, stateless, vulnerable human beings but also because this compelling image also evokes the idea of a person carrying the weight of the world on his/her shoulders. Those shoulders are painted in such a way as to emphasise the idea of a no man's land.

The artist, Kostas Papavlasopoulos, does not seek to influence what the viewer sees in this stark image. Instead, there are many viewing experiences and interpretations for different viewers with different contexts and backgrounds. However, we can recognise that, in creating this work of art, the painter was inspired by the never-ending plight of the refugees around the world.

Nomad in No Man’s Land is a study of both a bleak landscape and the almost irrevocable loss of identity; the blurring of the two reminds us

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that borders and borderlands carry the dreams and aspirations but also the most bitter disappointments of the human race.

Richard Pine
Vera Konidari

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Blanka Čechová is a Czech lawyer and writer. She studied law in Prague and writing in Oxford. After several years as an international jurist, working for organisations including the United Nations, she now concentrates on writing full-time. Her books include *Total Balkans* (from which we include an extract here) and the *Adriatic Bride* trilogy, currently in translation from Czech to English.

Melek Chekili lectures in French at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, and is currently completing a PhD in comparative studies in literature and culture.

Katherine Cooklin is professor of philosophy at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania and the author of several essays on social and political philosophy, contemporary Continental philosophy and gender/feminist theory.

Michael Davros lectures in English at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, specialising in American ethnic literature, African American literature and Hellenic American literature, on all of which subjects he has published widely. His *Greeks in Chicago* appeared in 2009.

Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990) was the author of many novels including *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-59), *Tunc-Nunquam* (1968-70) and *The Avignon Quintet* (1974-85). A distinguished poet, his *Collected Poems* appeared in 1980. He wrote extensively on landscape and character, including books on Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus, and *The Greek Islands* (1978). His experiences in the British diplomatic and public service brought him to Greece, Egypt, Argentina, Yugoslavia and Cyprus. He lived for the last thirty years of his life in the south of France, which he celebrated in *Caesar's Vast Ghost* (1990).

Robin Fedden (1908-1977) served as cultural attaché at the British Legation in Athens before the second world war, when he became a lecturer in English at Cairo University. In Cairo, with Lawrence Durrell and Bernard Spencer, he edited the journal *Personal Landscape*. Subsequently

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he worked for the National Trust (UK). He was the author of books on Egypt and Syria and *Chantemesle*, an account of his childhood in France.

Gail Holst-Warhaft is adjunct professor of comparative literature at Cornell University, where she founded and directed the Mediterranean Studies Initiative in the Institute for European Studies. As a musician she has played with Mikis Theodorakis and is the author of *Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music* (1980), *Road to Rembetika* (1975/1994) and *The Fall of Athens* (poems and memoir, 2016). She has made many translations from Greek, including the poems of Nikos Kavadias, Iakovos Kambanellis and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke. Her *Nisiotika: music and dances of the Aegean islands – sad songs of women who wait* is forthcoming.

Harriet Induni is an independent scholar whose research interests include cultural memory, ruins and decay and Irish literature.

Kapka Kassabova was born in Bulgaria before moving in childhood to New Zealand; she now lives in Scotland. She is a poet and novelist and, most recently, the author of explorations of the Balkans: *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe* (2018) and *To the Lake: a Balkan journey of war and peace* (2020).

Benjamin Keatinge is visiting research fellow in the School of English at Trinity College, Dublin and was previously Head of English, associate professor and Pro-Dean for Academic Issues at South-East European University, North Macedonia. He is the editor of *Making Integral: critical essays on Richard Murphy* (2019).

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Vera Konidari teaches English at the 1st High School of Corfu and previously lectured in Audiovisual Studies at the Ionian University (Corfu, Greece) 2004-2011. Her translations into Greek include Theodore Stephanides' *The Golden Face* (2019) and Lawrence Durrell's *The Magnetic Island* (2019). She co-edited *Islands of the Mind: Psychology, Literature and Biodiversity* (2020) and is working on a biography of Theodore Stephanides.

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Ian MacNiven is the authorised biographer of Lawrence Durrell (1998) and James Laughlin (2014) and has edited *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980* and, with Harry T Moore, *Literary Lifelines: the Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence*. He is an emeritus professor of literature at SUNY Maritime and is currently writing a triptych of novels set in his native Suriname.

Sirshendu Majumdar is associate professor of English at Bolpur College (University of Burdwan), India, author of *Yeats and Tagore: Cross-colonial Poetry, Nationalist Politics, Hyphenated Margins and the Ascendancy of the Mind* (2013) and co-editor of *Rabindranath Tagore: Humanity and Cultural Affinity* (2016). He was a visiting research fellow at Trinity College, Dublin 2018-19.

Sandra Mateus is a research fellow at the Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal and guest assistant at the Department of Sociology. She co-ordinated the Portuguese section of the "Below 10" European project and the PandPAS project focussing on refugees' integration and support. She has published widely on the topics of education and migration.

Eeva-Liisa Myllymäki is a career diplomat with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, and is currently working with the United Nations on peace and conflict issues. She has served as head of mission in Central America (Managua, 2011-2013), and at the Finnish permanent mission to the UN (2000-2004). She was president of the Finnish Peace Research Association 1977-1978 and is a board member of the Finnish Semiotic Society.

Mohamad Omari comes from a stateless Palestinian family, an experience which has allowed him to understand the rootless condition and transitions between cultures, religions and places. As his contribution to this volume indicates, he has worked as a translator and facilitator with refugees in Greece and has compiled *Let there be silence* (forthcoming), a collection of stories by and about Syrian refugees in transit between Turkey and Greece.

Elie Papadimitriou (1906-1993) was born in Smyrna; after the evacuation of Greeks from Anatolia in 1922 she grew up in Athens, until the world war forced her into exile in Egypt. She compiled several volumes of personal testimonies of survivors of the "Anatolian catastrophe", the

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second world war and the Greek civil war. She was also an accomplished photographer.

Richard Pine is director of the Durrell Library of Corfu, which he founded in 2001, having previously worked in the Irish national broadcasting service. He is the author of many books on literature and music, including *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (1994/2005), *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World* (2014) and *Greece Through Irish Eyes* (2015) and *Lawrence Durrell's Woven Web of Guesses* (Durrell Studies 2, 2021). He has edited Lawrence Durrell's novels *Judith* and *The Placebo* and *Endpapers and Inklings – Uncollected Prose 1933-1988* and, with Vera Konidari, *Islands of the Mind: Psychology, Literature and Biodiversity* (2020).

Paulo Santos is a research assistant at Observa Science in Society, the independent research body studying interaction between science, technology and society. He previously worked at the Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal.

Michalis Sarlis is a Teaching Fellow at the Department of Turkish and Modern Asian Studies of the University of Athens, where he teaches Middle East politics. His research interests include political violence and intra-state conflict in the Middle East, the political evolution of the Arab states and Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East, on which he has published widely.

Hedwig Schwall is director of the Leuven Centre for Irish Studies and editor of *Boundaries, Passages, Transitions* (*Irish Studies in Europe*, vol. 8, 2018) and *The Danger and the Glory* (2019). She is project director of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies, and is currently establishing a translation project on the work of Anne Enright.

Scott Manning Stevens is a citizen of the Akwesasne Mohawk nation and director of the Native American Indigenous Studies program at Syracuse University. He has published widely on Native American literatures and visual culture. He is co-author of *The Art of the American West* (2014) and co-editor of *Why You Can't Teach United States History without American Indians* (2015).

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Anissa Talahite-Moodley is an honorary research associate at Royal Holloway, University of London and an associate researcher at the University of Cergy-Pontoise, France. Her publications include *Problématiques identitaires et discours de l'exil dans les littératures francophones* (2007) and *Gender and Identity* (2013) and is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Gender Studies*.

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PART ONE:

TRANSLATION, MEANING AND IDENTITY

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CROSSING THE LINE(S): BORDERLANDS, METAPHOR AND MEANING

RICHARD PINE

Introduction

This essay will explore the *borderland* – the in-between space – which is home to migration and transition, to the "homeless mind", and to the imprecise meanings which lurk between definitions and within the attempts at translation. It will suggest that on each occasion of a borderland there is a need for a *metaphor*, or a bridge between states of polity, states of mind, states of language, states of sexuality, and that the elusiveness of that metaphor creates a sense of insecurity, mistrust and the uncanny which characterises so much of contemporary society: that, in essence, we live more in borderlands than within borders, and with a multiplicity of meanings and identities rather than black-and-white definitions and codes of behaviour. It is the uncertainty, the lack of metaphor, which, rather than imperilling meaning, enhances the conditions for discussion, debate and, of course, the danger of discord.

A metaphor-ical example may explain the *relativity* of borders and cultures and the precarious nature of the borderland (I write "metaphor-ical" to emphasise that the metaphor *is* the border):

When the poet Ovid was exiled from Rome to a village on the Black Sea (in present-day Romania) by the Emperor Augustus (ostensibly on account of his *Ars Amatoria*) he wrote: "*barbarus hic sum quia non intelligor ulli*" [I am regarded as a barbarian in this place because no-one understands me]. One of the leading poets of the "known" world became a barbarian because he had somehow crossed the border of *decency* in his written work; he had then been forced to cross the border of *civilisation* into an "unknown" world; he now lived among people, whom the Romans would regard as barbarians, but who could regard *him* as the barbarian,

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because they themselves possessed the civility of their location.[1] As André Naffis-Sahely tells us, "civilisation begets exile".[2] The *writer* is always in this space. Was Ovid black, white, or grey? Ovid's story exemplifies the *relativity* of civilisation in relation to barbarity and questions the entire status of borders as guarantors of that civilisation.

Later in this essay I will discuss "the Balkans", an area both with, and without, borders, a region which exemplifies all our fears and insecurities about our individual and collective identities. The example of "Balkanisation" will offer many examples of *the lack of metaphor*, especially as explored in the works of Maria Todorova and Kapka Kassabova.

In *coming to terms* (literally) with the concept of borders and borderlands – that is, in establishing a satisfactory language, one that does not necessarily depend on metaphor – we should understand that there is a spectrum of differences, and of the lines that differentiate them, from the hard line of a political *frontier* to the laws of the state which we should not cross, the physical contours of the landscape and the metaphysical contours of the mindscape, the difficult conduit of the *corpus collosum* between the hemispheres of the brain, and the "soft" borders between truth and untruth, trust and distrust, place and displacement.

If it is possible, without breaking any social code or *mos*, to move across such borders, then it must also be possible to move between territories of the mind. But such a trans-itus is open to dangerous constructions and can lead to violence. John Buchan wrote: "There are spiritual frontiers, the horizons of the mind. We are still frontiersmen in a true sense, for we are domiciled on the edge of mystery".[3] And "mystery", with its association with the "uncanny", can breed fear and its consequences.

Borders, borderlands and metaphor

A border: a line on the ground, on the map, in the mind, across which we can or can not, may or may not, move.

A borderland: a space between two border-lines, a "no-man's-land" or "in-between" space of indeterminate quality and status.

A metaphor: a means of crossing from one side of a border to the other (I deliberately emphasise the basic Greek word *μεταφέρω* [*metaféro*]

---

[1] Similarly the Anatolian Greeks, after the 1922-23 exchange of populations, found that in Greece (a country which was foreign to them) they were regarded as *Turks*.
[2] A Naffis-Sahely (ed.), *The Heart of a Stranger*, p. 1.
[3] "The Interpreter's House" (1938) quoted in Ursula Buchan, *Beyond the Thirty-Nine Steps*, p. 368.

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meaning *to carry across*); a crossing, for example, from one language to another (also, literally, a *trans-lation* , since *trans-late* and *trans-fer* are the "translations" from Greek to Latin and hence to English).[4]

Arrival at a border raises issues such as cultural negotiation, and confrontation with otherness. The *crossing* of borders affects meaning, perception of landscape and sense of identity.

Borders are spatial, conceptual, spiritual and psychological and shape the dynamics of identity, community, and governance. They are necessary to the extent that a society regards its identity as dependent upon the definitions which borders can, but not always, provide.

Borders are enforced by the law, which in itself creates boundaries (a catalogue of "thou shalt not..."). Seldom does a law encourage or liberate: in most cases it sets limits to freedom and norms of behaviour, the crossing of which invites ostracism or exclusion. The innateness of "civil rights" presupposes the existence of laws which protect those rights. If one breaks the law, one "oversteps the mark" (that is, the boundary, the line in the sand) between "good" and "evil", "acceptable/unacceptable", "permissible/impermissible" (boundary-breaking actions). But what is it, to live in a world *without laws*? Or a world where there is "one law for the rich, one law for the poor"? A society where some have "civil rights" and others have none? And what of those internal borders, those porous, pervious membranes in the mind, where we decide for ourselves what is, or is not, allowed?

One principle seems to me to be paramount: that we must distinguish between the inevitable existence of borders – both on the physical and moral bases – and the equally inevitable crossing of such borders by people in all conditions. Think of refugees displaced by civil war, or the asylum-seekers from totalitarian states, in the same frame of mind as the "exilic" intellectual who is, in effect, stateless; or the woman who discovers that she is trapped in a man's body and undergoes the transgender trans-ition in search of a new identity; or the orphaned child who no longer has the security of parental care or love or a physical home. None of these can be prioritised over the others, and none can be regarded as culpable for their "trans-gression".

A keyword in the paradox of borders is "transgression". There may be a fine line to be drawn between the meanings of "transgression": to violate, or trespass on, another's property (his land or his ideas) or the movement from one place or idea to another without culpability – a

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[4] Or, in Russian, *пере-вести*, or in German *über-setzen*; the ubiquity of this concept of *carrying across* is at the heart of metaphor and, therefore, at the heart also of the crossing of borders in search of meaning.

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quality of "transgressivity" which connotes nothing more than, for example, "oscillation between center and periphery […] a simple act of border crossing inherent to the system".[5] "Trans-gression" therefore depends for its positive/negative connotation on its "transgressivity": whether it is an agreed and understood action, or one which is open to doubt and dispute. Toni Morrison's much-quoted act of "trans-gression" underlines this core-periphery oscillation: "I stood at the border. Stood at the edge and claimed it as central, and let the rest of the world move over to where I was".[6]

Conversely, Anna Burns's novel *Milkman* severely depicts the insecurity of both sides in the virtual civil war in Northern Ireland, so minute, topographically, that to move from one street to another in Belfast might be seen as an act of betrayal. To cross the street might be a normal act of "trans-gression" but in Anna Burns's Belfast it can become a reason for killing.[7]

Binary ethical divisions – White or Black, Right or Left – offer no space for discussion, no "grey area". So, there is an ethical dilemma where some thought or action might be *both* right *and* wrong. For many, this in-betweenness is a natural habitat – as if uncertainty in meaning is more "homely" than the black-and-white polarity of definitions. As film-maker Syllas Tzoumerkas says of his 2019 film *The Miracle of the Sargasso Sea*, "I love raising questions. I love grey areas, I love the gaps that sometimes exist between different convictions".[8] I recall George Steiner: "Uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry".[9]

The creation and defence of borders, for example in defining the nation-state, involve both inclusion and exclusion, invasion and enlargement, and pose questions about political, cultural and personal identity. Knowledge, power, *anomie* and xenophobia are intimately associated with these processes.

Borders exist in order to define what is included and what is excluded. Even the walls of our houses define our own "civilisation" from

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[5] B Westphal, *Geocriticism: real and fictional spaces*, quoted in B. Keatinge (ed.), *Making Integral: critical essays on Richard Murphy*, p. 85.
[6] In a 1998 interview with Lana Wendt, in Toni Morrison, *Playing with Difference*, p. 101.
[7] It is noteworthy that, where Bahriye Kemal can state that Nicosia is "the world's last divided city" she ignores the "peace wall" dividing Protestant Belfast from Catholic Belfast: *Nicosia Beyond Barriers*, p. ix.
[8] Interview with Aimilios Charbis, *Kathimerini* English edition, 12 December 2019.
[9] G Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 234.

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the “barbarians” at the gate. There is an excitement, as well as a danger, in exploring what lies *between* borders, in the borderlands where civilisation meets the barbarians, where law meets outlaw, where insider meets outsider. A delicious, vertiginous excitement in the uncertain, “grey” area where one might fall in love.

On the larger scale, the building of walls to protect “us” is one of the basic duties of a civil society and yet it is capable of demonstrating and activating that most dangerous of collective emotions: nationalism. The fact that, by the end of 2019, ten of the twenty-eight EU states had erected walls specifically to exclude migrants illustrates the *fear* of the Other that both creates civil society and exposes its most craven weaknesses.

The most basic border is that between “Us” and “Them”. It is at the same time the most understandable and the most unforgivable, because fear and prejudice are the complement of difference and otherness. In psychological terms, we are concerned with the Self and the Other, the gap between them, and the means of crossing that gap. Whether it is an *ethnos* or a political state or a language, or even the line dividing two sides of a street, the transition of the Self towards the Other is the root of our behaviour and, therefore, of our anxiety. In a world increasingly without borders, we seem desperate to erect fences between ourselves and those whose labels we neither respect nor accept. We should not overlook the idea that bridges, which are conventionally the conduit of metaphor, can also act “like traitors – they go over to the other side”.[10]

Perspectives

I offer here some brief “thumbnail” examples of the issues that arise when we consider different aspects of the *topic* – and I use the word to emphasise that it is from a sense of *place* (Greek, *topos*) that such issues arise. *Where* you are – the *topos* – dictates what you think and how you express your thoughts. In *The Alexandria Quartet* Lawrence Durrell incorporated two statements:

> Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed;
> We live lives based upon selected fictions.[11]

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[10] Allegedly the remark of Ian Paisley, leader of a particularly hard-line sect of protestant opinion, when political leaders in Northern Ireland tried to establish lines of communication with the leaders of the (predominantly Catholic) Republic – a step which many such as Paisley regarded as an act of betrayal.
[11] L Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 210.

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The first proposal indicates that there can often be a very narrow line separating two or more points of view, and that, in both physical and intellectual terms, these differences of perspective might lead to severe differences in temperament. “From where I stand, I see it *this* way”. “And from where *I* stand, *I* see it *this* way”. Two “this-es” do not make a “that”. And so we disagree and, quite possibly, go to war.[12]

The second proposal indicates that there may be a correspondingly narrow line, or border, between fact and fiction: the converse of Durrell’s statement would be that “we live lives based upon selected *facts*”. As in the case of differences of perspective, the possible clash of facts and fictions, either between individuals or between groups, or even within a single mind, is potentially a source of friction or discord.

My references are anecdotal because we cannot understand borders by looking merely at a map – a paper landscape – or a GPS facility. These give no sense of either a border being crossed or a border being not crossed. And they give no indication of the mindscape of the person, or the society, in borderland. I think of:

- the millions of refugees who have made the perilous crossings from Turkey to Lesvos and Chios and Samos, or from Libya to Lampedusa; and the thousands of men, women and children – the children surely the most innocent – who have drowned in that attempt – constituting, in death, a permanent no-man’s-land or borderland of anonymity, vulnerability and, perhaps, innocence;
- the child of my friends who was born “Louis” but is now “Lily”, who, at the age of fourteen, found that she was a girl trapped in a boy’s body and now, at the age of eighteen, is negotiating the border-crossing from one gender-label to another gender-label;
- the Albanian women who, in order to inherit property, must undertake to live as men, suppressing all aspects of their gender;[13]
- Franz Kafka, so tortured between three languages and three

[12] Joseph Brodsky speaks of “Turkish *Gastarbeiters* prowling the streets of West Germany, uncomprehending or envious of the surrounding reality” (“The Condition we call ‘Exile’" in *Literature in Exile* (ed. John Gled), p. 100). We should note here that the “reality” is normal only for the West Germans, and *unreal* for the Turkish guest-workers. What is perfectly comprehensible to the Germans is incomprehensible to the Turks, *because of where they stand.*
[13] As discussed by Elvira Dones, in *Sworn Virgin* (2014).

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cultures that he began to doubt his own existence;[14]

- the "Poets' Road"[15] that so closely follows the borders and borderlands between eastern Finland and the Russian Federation for 1000 kilometres, from Salla to the Gulf of Finland, dividing the province of Karelia, the heartland of Finnish folklore which gave it, in the nineteenth century, its sense of identity, where the new border of 1944 called that identity into question;
- the rivers in Kosovo dividing ethnic Albanians (mostly Muslim) in Mitrovica from ethnic Serbs (mostly Orthodox Christians) in Kosovska Mitrovica;
- the "Pontic Greeks" (who had lived for at least five centuries in the Black Sea region from which they derived their designation), exiled from their homeland in Russia, trying to find a new life on the edge of Athens; they are liminal and foreign in every sense: their Pontic version of Greek is almost unintelligible to Athenians; Constantinos Giannaris's 1998 film *From the Edge of the City* (*Από την άκρη της πόλης*) depicts their possible life turning towards drugs and prostitution;
- the chilling statement by Albert Memmi "*I was Tunisian and therefore colonized*"[16] which opens an entire debate, not merely about the inevitability of colonisation, but about what *place* can mean in relation to *displacement*, what *identity* can mean in relation to the *anonymity* enforced by relocation; Memmi "was consumed by alienation": "I am Tunisian, but Jewish, which means that I am politically and socially an outcast";
- Tassos Boulmetis's film *Politiki Kouzina/A Touch of Spice*, showing the translation of Greek cuisine from Anatolia: "Our cuisine is tinged with politics. It's made by people who left their dinner unfinished somewhere else";
- the symbiosis of master and servant, wherein each takes on the strengths and weaknesses of the other – in Pergolesi's opera *La Serva padrona* or in Joseph Losey's 1963 film *The Servant* – to say nothing of P G Wodehouse's comical creation, the duo of Jeeves and Wooster;

[14] I think of Kafka's short story "The Bridge", where the narrator *is* the bridge attempting, and failing, to provide a metaphor and thus questioning his/its own identity or ontology: we *become* the attempt itself of translation.
[15] Officially designated "The Road of Poem and Border", 2002.
[16] A Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, p. viii.

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- the case of a pathological individual, where there may be, within the one mind, psychological borders which, if liberated from any ethical or moral inhibition, can be negotiated with equanimity: "He finds himself in a twilight zone where all the boundaries that exist for him are of his own making […] He has two different identities that he controls utterly";[17]
- and finally, those words φιλότιμο [filótimo, sense of honour] and αγάπη [agápi, love] which are virtually untranslateable, without borders, but which often find themselves in borderlands.

The failure of metaphor

A metaphor, to be successful as a carrying across (of persons, material or meaning), must be exact: the transference across the border must be *the same on either side*; the *meaning* carried across the linguistic border must be *the same in either language*, despite the differences in the two languages, and the two cultures. The near-impossibility of metaphor, of exact mapping of one mindscape onto another, is at the heart of violence.[18]

Compromise is the antithesis of metaphor but also the substitute for metaphor, since it excludes the possibility of complete, exact, transference of meaning from one side of the discussion to the other. While metaphor is essential for exact translation, it is so seldom achieved that it is possible to envisage a world without metaphor, but with multiple meanings, even as the basis of communication, the encoding and decoding of messages between people, between governments.[19] In translating between languages – for example, literary texts – the near-impossibility of *exact* metaphor gives the translator the *latitude* of imagination. In recent years, the determination of many transgender people of "non-binary" status underlines the impossibility of establishing definitive status of gender – where the male/female polarity gives way to a "both/and": imprecise in established terminology, but thereby establishing its own new norms.[20]

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[17] Henning Mankel, *Sidetracked*, p. 174.
[18] See Melek Chekili's essay on "Untranslatability" in this volume.
[19] This, in the study of language and grammar, seems to have become a commonplace: so much so that (as for example in the work of Denis Donoghue [*Metaphor*]) the congruence of *simile* and *metaphor* has become permissible.
[20] Note, for example, the following: "Despina Michaelidou was born in Limassol. They are a post-graduate student [...] Their interests include genders, sexualities, desires and bodies": in *Nicosia Beyond Borders*, p. 236.

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It is, perhaps, the *label* which is the most revealing aspect of our distrust – of both others *and* ourselves; as the p our distrust – of both others *and* ourselves; as the poet Brendan Kennelly said, in regard to the tyranny of labels and labelling: "I came out of a very labelled society [County Kerry, Ireland, in the 1930s]. I resisted, or resented, people beating you with labels and *assuming* all that to be true about you. So my engagement with the label was a war against a facile understanding of the complexity I apprehended in myself […] and felt vaguely insulted by being described in easily accessible ways."[21] The poet went on to re-examine the "labels" which had been attached by Irish nationalism to Oliver Cromwell (*Cromwell: a poem*, 1983) and by Catholicism to Judas Iscariot (*The Book of Judas*, 1991).

I think of the poem "Walls" by Constantine Cavafy, whose awareness in his own life of the borders that can and cannot be crossed was acute:

> Without consideration, without pity, without shame,
> they built around me great and towering walls.
> …....................
> Imperceptibly, they shut me off from the world outside.[22]

And reference to Cavafy also, predictably, evokes "Waiting for the Barbarians", where the poet remarks

> night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
> And some of our men just in from the border say
> there are no barbarians any longer.
>
> Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
> Those people were a kind of solution.[23]

Without someone to fear, without a threat to one's "civilisation", there is no need for walls. Where would we be without walls? If we had no-one to hate? The cruellest walls are those within the heart, within the psyche, dividing love from reality, sense from hope. Walls that shut down all possibility. One thinks of Albert Memmi's pursuit of the theme of colonisation in *Dependence*, where he emphasises the symbiosis and

[21] B Kennelly and R Pine, "The Roaring Storm of Your Words".
[22] C Cavafy. "Walls", from *Poems 1910* in *Collected Poems* trans. Evangelos Sachperoglou, pp.12-13.
[23] C Cavafy, "Waiting for the Barbarians" in *Collected Poems* trans. E Keeley and P Sherrard, p. 15.

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mutual dependence of coloniser and colonised, citizen and barbarian.

It is in the transference of thought – no less than of material goods or persons – that the danger exists of misunderstanding. Where a *person* crosses a border, they are, inevitably, changed by the experience of the transition. Where a thought is moved from one language to another or from one mind to another, a similar change is inevitable.

All people tell their stories, as individuals and as societies; a dominant, outward-going nation will tell stories from a position of strength and confidence, and its public and private narratives will establish their credible, acceptable images and traditions of orthodoxy, success and rootedness; whereas a colonised, subdued nation, however inhibited by its subjection, will tell stories of failure and embarrassment, narratives of self-doubt, and will create images of hope and despair which are future-oriented; thus nations tell these stories differently before and after freedom. When freedom comes, men and women explore each other in a new light, as citizens and as lovers, but above all they explore freedom itself. Attitudes to land, society and sexuality take on new perspectives and are subject to new descriptions. Narratives alter both subtly and violently.[24]

The change is manifold: it involves *time* (the movement through history); *violence* (physical revolution in the pursuit of freedom and independence); and *psychology* (the new ideas consequent on the arrival at that state of freedom which, for example in the case of a long-dominated people, has been unknown except as an alien concept). To carry an entire culture across from subjection to freedom is a process (often referred to as "decolonisation") which is dangerous in the extreme, as we have seen in the tragic post-colonial experiences of so many newly independent states.

To carry across meaning (for example in diplomacy) always involves a potential act of hostility. Translation as a quest for mutual meaning can also be an act of hostility. In political or ethical terms, that kind of attempted untruth happens all the time. When is the truth not the truth? When it is "true" for you, but "false" to me. It's another instance of "From where I stand ..." These issues highlight the fact that *all* border crossings involve, to some degree, political, ethical, moral, or cultural *choice* and that such choice will lead to inclusion, love, creativity and understanding as much as to exclusion, fear, hatred, violence and destruction.

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[24] This paragraph incorporates material from R Pine, *The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World*, p. xxiv.

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The borders of time and memory

As we age, we move across borders of time: birth itself, college graduation, "leaving home",[25] parenthood, the death of one's parents, retirement and the final border-crossing of one's own death, are all signals of transition and also markers of different kinds of memory.

Movement in space is also movement in time: each time we cross the room, we occupy several moments of time – time which was future, is present, and will become past, and in doing so we cross those borders between times. Time zones.[26] And movement, even within a confined space (the very word "confined" suggests both inclusion and exclusion) creates differences which can in themselves create boundaries.

Much longer s*paces of time* can create discrete identities between the same person: Lawrence Durell's novel *The Placebo* posits a character who revisits his own past and sees himself as a different person to whom he refers as "he" rather than "I": "rather like turning out a dead man's pockets […] Could he have been myself?"[27] Many writers, revisiting their early work, reflect "Did I really write that?" Durrell also famously adopted Rimbaud's "*Je est un Autre*" ["I" is an Other], thus emphasising that within the apparently single identity there can be two, or more, identities, each with its own borders and borderlands.[28] Edward Said also expresses this idea of multiple personalities: "I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self".[29]

The movement, through time, of the individual is microcosmically the movement through time of society. If one can be so "moved" by a theatre performance as to become (slightly or significantly) a different person, then a people or a state which has experienced a war will be *a different state* and *in* a different state, with consequent affect on the status and nature of memory and relation to history.[30]

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[25] See Rony Alfandary, "Leaving Home and Adolescence in Lawrence Durrell's *Pied Piper of Lovers*: a psychoanalytic reading".

[26] Zoran Nikolić may be only half-joking when he draws attention to one border where "it is possible for a ball to leave the ground on the border golf course in one hour and to land an hour earlier", or where, in another instance, "it is possible to cross a national border by moving from one end of a restaurant to another": *The Atlas of Unusual Borders*.

[27] L Durrell, *The Placebo* (eds. R Pine and D Roessel), pp. 133-4.

[28] See Durrell's poem "*Je est un Autre*", *Collected Poems*, pp. 106-7. Oscar Wilde's poem "Hélas" is also relevant here: "But strange, that I was not told / That the brain can hold / In a tiny, ivory cell / God's heaven, and hell".

[29] E Said, *Out of Place*, p. 295.

[30] See the essay by Michalis Sarlis in this volume.

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Witnessing a theatre performance, we are perhaps "moved" by the presentation, and thus we pass from the previous emotional or intellectual state to the state which the performance has facilitated or provoked.[31] We leave "home" in pursuit of a transitus into a world of "make-believe" in the course (or procedure) of which we become altered – in which we ourselves are trans-lated, borne across from our previous state of mind to that in which we exit the theatre. After witnessing *Uncle Vanya* or *Faith Healer* or *Death of a Salesman*, whatever the quality of the acting or the production, *we can never be the same person again.* On our return to our home we cross the threshold a different person to the one who left. (I am reminded of Hannah Arendt: "Conscience is the anticipation of the fellow who awaits you if and when you come home".[32] And T S Eliot: "The man who returns will have to meet / The boy who left".[33])

There are also the *rites of passage* which mark the (spi)ritual crossings from one emotional state to another – baptism, bar mitzvah, communion – in fact any ritual transitus, often of initiation or integration. A *rite* of passage is a sacred process, regardless of its context, because it enters into a (w)holiness in the sense of a completion, an integrated experience with its own mystery, into which the transitional mind is initiated. Even the smallest child, hearing its parent's recitation of a fairy-tale, is being initiated by the rite of storytelling into the world of fable, and thence to the world where fictions and facts live side-by-side. Opening a book – especially an unfamiliar one – is a basic liminal experience which is also a rite.

Arnold van Gennep, in *Rites of Passage* (especially in his chapter "The Territorial Passage"), is anxious, throughout his work, to stress the boundary-crossing that a rite of passage involves, the "magico-religious aspect of crossing frontiers".[34] His statement that "a man […] moves into the realm of the sacred when he goes on a journey and finds himself a foreigner near a camp of strangers"[35] is a crucial insight into the condition of quest and the consequential exile from "home" which *all* transitional, or liminal, experiences involve. Van Gennep also states that "to the semi-civilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred".[36] I would extend that to *all* minds, whether they are conscious of it or not.

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[31] For a discussion of "witnessing" in theatre performance, see Emilie Pine, *The Memory Marketplace* (2020) *passim.*
[32] H Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1, p. 191.
[33] T S Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, in *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 288.
[34] A van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, p. 15.
[35] Ibid., p. 12.
[36] Ibid., p. 3.

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"The Balkans" *or* "Our bitter beloved borderless Balkans"[37]

To understand "the Balkans" we should, as Maria Todorova urges us, revisit our attitude to the concept of the nation-state and, especially, national borders and national identity. In Todorova's terms, "imagining the Balkans" requires us to abandon traditional ways of seeing, any sense of homogeneity or the polarisation that "west" and "east" suggest either explicitly or subliminally. In fact, the *limen*, the threshold or *cusp* – and especially the *invisible border* – is the key characteristic of the volatility and heterogeneity of the region commonly known – to westerners, since the eighteenth century – as "the Balkans".

This point in my discussion intends not merely to draw attention to the pores of which Europe (both "west" *and* "east") seem to be composed, but to the analogues of languages, dialects, faiths, lores, arts, sciences and sexualities on which they are so flimsily constructed. (Lawrence Durrell's image of Alexandria – "five races, five languages, a dozen creeds […] more than five sexes" – seems apposite in its understatement.)[38] The word "balkan" itself has many meanings, usually associated with "mountain", and the epiphany of mountains and mountain ranges across the region, as barriers to both physical and metaphysical movement, assists in understanding the complexity. So, too, can rivers which encounter – more effectively than roads – many cultures and environments from source to sea, changing their own character as they do so: "Danube", for example, is more an idea than a waterway, passing through many histories, many perspectives, many identities.[39] And like rivers and mountains, human emotions and cultures are irreducible.

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[37] K Kassabova, *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe*, p. 331: "I felt it like a presence: the spirit of the Balkans was here [...] The true spirit of the Balkans that hangs on, no matter how renamed and resettled, imagined and invented. Our bitter beloved borderless Balkans."

[38] L Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet*, p. 13.

[39] See the very persuasive *Danube* by Claudio Magris. Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* points to the need for a similar work on "the Levant", partially fulfilled by Philip Mansel's *Levant*. Todorova draws attention (pp. 124-5) to Marcus Ehrenpreis's *The Soul of the East* (1928) to suggest that the western conception of the east could begin to manifest itself even as far west as Prague. See also Fred A Reed, *Salonica Terminus* (p. 177) who refers sarcastically to "the opprobrium which the self-satisfied European world reserves for what it describes as the tribal excesses of ethnic consciousness or national identity".

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There is no Aristotelian "excluded middle" here:[40] rather the opposite, an "included middle" which also features the "grey areas" of "both/and" which are the alternative to the binary "us/them", "either/or". When confronted with the impossibility of "either/or", we should understand the inevitability not merely of "both/and" but that there will be *at least three* entities in the equation.

The aftermath of the second world war contributed enormously to the conceptual, polarised understanding of the Balkans which were, with the exception of Greece, almost totally communist in persuasion. The idea that Greece might play a dominant role in the Balkans – expressed for example by André Michalopoulos, the spokesman of the Greek government-in-exile, in *Greek Fire* (1943) – was suppressed by the reality of the Churchill-Stalin deal of 1944 which extracted Greece from this communist hegemony and placed it, effectively, within the ambit of American/western foreign policy.[41]

In a 2016 interview, the US ambassador to Greece, Geoffrey Pyatt, spoke of "a three circle Venn diagram that has, in one circle, North Africa and the Maghreb, in another circle the Eastern Mediterranean [and] Syria, and then, in a third circle, the Black Sea region […] The place where that Venn diagram comes together is in Greece".[42]

Greece today, a "between" state, sits at the centre of the tension and the a-metaphoric east-west conundrum. Greece, as the epitome of the Balkans, is both core and periphery, both centre and cusp, both hearth and threshold. And yet Fred A Reed, in a Balkan journey in the 1990s, could see Greece as "an imaginary construct", a nation "sustained" by myth.[43] The proposition that a member-state of the EU could be also an "imaginary construct" is a sobering one.

But "balkanisation", as a term indicating the fragmentation of a whole – the Ottoman Empire – into discrete elements and aspects which became the so-called nation-states of the region, is almost a synonym for the Balkans themselves. (Reed calls the modern Balkans "the bastard child

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[40] Aristotle (*Metaphysics* Book Gamma, chs. 7 and 8) insisted on a binary approach to identity: if it is "A" then it cannot be "B", and "B" cannot be "A", thus excluding the possibility of any middle, indeterminate or third meaning.

[41] For a brief discussion of the geopolitics of modern Greece in the post-Churchill-Stalin entente, see R Pine, *Greece Through Irish Eyes*, pp. 54-57.

[42] G Pyatt, interview with Tom Ellis, "Greece-USA cooperation closest it has been for a long time", *Kathimerini* English edition, 27 November 2016. He also, memorably, said with regard to "misinformation", "truth is fungible".

[43] Reed, *Salonica Terminus*, pp. x-xi.

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of the Ottoman Empire and Western imperialism".)[44] Yet the very impermanence of those nation-states, under the weight of both history and destiny, demonstrates how indefinite is any single element in the overall complexity. Kapka Kassabova willingly, and understandably, accepts the alleged remark by Winston Churchill, that "the Balkans produce more history than they can consume".[45]

Kapka Kassabova, in *To the Lake*, exemplifies the fragmentation implicit in the term "Balkans" with a statement by a Macedonian: "Europe wants us to be poor, divided and ignorant. That's why we've had nothing but bad governance. It's all orchestrated by the great powers".[46] He might have been speaking from the depths of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Kassabova herself, at the conclusion of *To the Lake*, adopts this as her personal mantra: "Don't let the bastards divide me again. Our tragedy is fragmentation. It begins as a state of mind and ends up as destiny."[47]

As a home for the *Romantic*, the *Gothic*, and the *Uncanny*, the lands from Vienna and Trieste in the west to Constantinople/Istanbul and Varna in the east, from Prague in the north to Crete in the south, entered the western, orientalist, imagination and created – even in the minds of politicians – ideas of identity which are belied by experience.

The "Balkan Wars" of 1912-13, which accompanied the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, were, in effect, a dress rehearsal for the first world war. They showed how the identities of millions, most of whom were – and are today – minority cultures, can be interrupted, invaded, and relocated, but *not* suspended or destroyed.

The creation of nation-states in the Balkans in the twentieth century imposed not only the style of government, administration and jurisprudence considered by the western powers to be the basis of civilisation, but political borders that took no notice of language, religion or culture. Dubrovka Stojanovic refers to this as

> the Balkanization of memory [which] requires the constitution of a new, antagonized memory, constructing enemies from former neighbours in order for states mentally to consolidate, homogenize, gain meaning […] to create […] a new memory […] and to put together a context that

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[44] Ibid., p. xi.

[45] The remark, while it is possibly correctly attributed to Churchill, in fact originated in a story by Saki [Hector Munro] in reference to *Crete*; see Keith Brown, *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation*, p. xi.

[46] K Kassabova, *To the Lake: a Balkan journey of war and peace*, p. 145.

[47] *To the Lake*, p. 372. See Kapka Kassabova's poems from *Someone else's life* in this volume.

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provides an ethical framework for the present.[48]

Thus memory can both erect and destroy the barriers which in their turn both enable and obstruct.

The disintegration of the areas which from 1918 until the 1980s constituted "Yugoslavia" indicates the irresistible force of identity in exposing itself to political reality with obscenely positive outcomes. Areas such as Kosovo not only highlight the existence of barriers which are at one and the same time political, racial and religious, but also the absurdity of such barriers.[49] Recent discord between Macedonia and Greece over the very existence of a Macedonian *ethnos* and language is a sign of how fiercely these permeable borders can lead to rupture.

The idea that a political commentator such as John Gunther could attribute the cause of the first world war to "quarrels" in these "wretched and unhappy little countries" with the "loathsome and almost obscene snarls" in Balkan politics, "hardly intelligible to a Western reader"[50] suggests that the "western" reading of European history requires some revision.

Even the collusion between cartographers and politicians runs amok: Todorova refers to the metamorphosis in the terms applied by *Realpolitik* throughout the modern period from "Balkans" to "Southeast Europe" to "Eastern Europe" to "Central Europe", with, apparently, no consensus on a single designation, because consensus requires that all parties stand in the same place at the same time – an impossible condition.[51]

The Irish "fifth province" is relevant here: a non-existent location which posits the centre of the world by dividing it into five parts: north, south, east, west and *here*. In ancient Ireland the word for a province was *coicéad* meaning "a fifth", and yet there were, and are, only four provinces in Ireland, plus an "unposited middle".[52] "The figure five is the four of the crossroads plus the point of crossing, the moment of arrival and departure".[53] It is also called "Uisneach, the secret centre, where all

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[48] D Stojanovic, "What is a Nation?"
[49] See Blanka Čechová's contribution (from her *Total Balkans*) to this volume.
[50] J Gunther, *Inside Europe Today*, p. 437.
[51] M Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, pp. 140-42. In *Nicosia Beyond Barriers: voices from a divided city*, Bahriye Kemal draws attention to what she calls "the name game" of the nomenclatures and topographies of Nicosia, as a "shared and contested site" (p. ix) among Greeks, Turks, Armenians, and in the post-colonial context, citing Nicosia (the English name), Λευκωσία (Leucosia: Greek) and Lefkoşa/Lefkosha (Turkish) (pp. x-xi).
[52] B Purcell, "In Search of Newgrange: Long Night's Journey into Day".
[53] "Editorial" in *The Crane Bag* vol. 1 (1982) p. 11.

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oppositions were resolved" and the true location of seers, poets and magicians, whose function was "the discovery of points where unrelated things coincide".[54]

I suggest that this concept of "here" may be the only possible location: it is emphasised by Kapka Kassabova in *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe* (2018) and *To the Lake: a Balkan journey of war and peace* (2020): that "here" is a place where one is known, has context, and therefore meaning, but that to move from "here" is full of danger to the personal freedoms of memory and meaning. Kassabova's precarious and vertiginous lives in her transitions from Albania to Macedonia to Bulgaria to Turkey and to northern Greece represent, to me, the "balkanisation" not only of lands but of minds – minds which are in desperate search of the integrity that comes from context, memory and meaning. It is of course an exciting journey of exploration and discovery, but it is more than the homely mind is capable of sustaining. It requires a greater genius of courage and insouciance that is lacking in most of us.[55]

In *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe*, Kassabova writes "the human story of the last border of Europe. It is where Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey converge and diverge, borders being what they are. It is also where something like Europe begins and something else ends which isn't quite Asia".[56] That "something like ... isn't quite", echoes Takis Theodoropoulos's statement: "Greece is kind of European, with kind of eastern roots and Balkan influence, and a kind of Mediterranean mentality. Greeks speak a language that sounds kind of Greek and, as a result, they kind of understand each other."[57] It's clearly a land of vertigo, of indecision, because it works against decision, precision and definition. Kassabova says "It may be that all borderlands hum with the frequencies

[54] Ibid.

[55] The title *To the Lake* is, I think, deliberately misleading, since it is "a tale of two lakes" – Ohrid and Prespa – between which Kassabova, her own history and the histories, legends, fears and joys of those she encounters, commute and oscillate. Similarly, in her novel *Love in the Land of Midas* Kassabova shows us a city – Salonica/Thessaloniki – of many cultures, languages, histories and destinies, a city which defies definition, which may today be part of Greece but which carries within it centuries of "otherness". Fred A Reed sees it as a "city of shadows", and Mark Mazower titles it "city of ghosts" - the indeterminate, almost chameleon quality of the city's lives, memories and destinies is typical of balkanisation.

[56] K Kassabova, *Border*, p. xv.

[57] T Theodoropoulos, *Athens News*, 15 July 2014; Theodoropoulos is the author of at least ten novels of which only one, *The Power of the Dark God* (*I Dyname tou Skateinou Theou*, 1999) has been translated into English (although several are available in French translation).

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of the unconscious; after all, borders are where the fabric is thin". She goes on to suggest that it is the region threatened by "the systemic sickness at the heart of our world [which has] spread from one periphery to another, because nowhere is remote any more".[58]

Elsewhere, Kassabova has written: "The struggle to own your name, your mother tongue and the letters of your alphabet, your past, your present, your children, the graves of your dead, to exist at all – this struggle, when passed down the generations undigested and further multiplied in a schizoid tug-of-war between cousins and siblings, is almost the definition of systemic illness."[59] In this latter book, *To the Lake*, Kassabova refers to Macedonia as "a small, vulnerable country whose identity was [and I would add, is] still a work in progress" which leads her to ask: "What is nation, what is geography? Meaning: what is history?"[60] She points to many "Macedonias", one of which is "imaginary", "that does not exist anywhere except in the desperate collective desire for a great past that is required to infuse the diminished present with meaning and value".

This, too, resonates within Greece's own quest for a meaning which could reconcile its "great past" with its ambiguous present and future. Indeed, in an age of globalisation, uniformity, conformity and commodification, it calls into question the ontology of the "nation-state", its borders, its *mores*, its *raison d'être* and even the meaning of a "periphery". "The Balkans", it seems, provide us with a role-model for both hope and despair.

Kassabova also makes the crucial observation that the Balkans is "an arena both of marriage and war not only between Christianity, Islam and Judaism, but also between the Occident and the Orient, and therein lay their complexity and their trouble".[61] This observation makes ambassador Pyatt's Venn diagram seem positively simple and superficial.

The citizen of the borderland: the writer as exile

One can become an exile by a slip of the tongue, a slip of the pen, a slip of the foot. One can even point to the original Biblical expulsion-exile, from Eden, which suggests that humanity is on a recidivist path of original sin, perpetually and irredeemably in an exilic state. All these movements in mind and body result in our being placed beyond the border of the

[58] K Kassabova, *Border*, p. xvii.
[59] K Kassabova, *To the Lake*, p. 347.
[60] Ibid., pp. 35, 37.
[61] Ibid., p. 79.

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civilisation from which we have erred. And in a *borderland* or *non-place* which is the exilic condition.

In all these terms – "outsider", "stranger", "refusal", "revolt" – we sense strangeness and *difference*. The distinguishing feature of the outlaw, or of any outsider, is his or her innate difference which defines him or her in some way – either simple, as in a murderous law-breaker, or complex, such as an eccentric, or eremitic character – and thereby becomes a subject of suspicion, mistrust, fear or hatred. The outsider stands outside the society in which he originated, either by choice, necessity or compulsion. There is a mis-match between his chosen norms and *mores* and the norms and *mores* by which the rest of society has defined itself. Difference is, in this sense, dissidence and deviance, and may involve rebellion against those prevailing norms. The outsider either defines himself by his exit from society, or is defined by virtue of his unacceptable presence within it.[62]

The typical citizens (if one can call them that) of these borderlands are those for whom "exile" is a metaphor for "home": outlaws, outcasts, deviants, dissidents, eccentrics, and, above all, writers (because the writer is, almost by definition, the paramount outsider). George Steiner, in his essays *Extraterritorial*, refers to "the a priori strangeness of the idea of a writer linguistically 'unhoused', or displaced or hesitant at the frontier".[63] Steiner also suggests that "the modern movement can be seen as a strategy of permanent exile".[64]

Edward Said's "overriding sensation I had was [...] always being out of place"[65] approximates to my concept of the writer never-at-home. Self-questioning, in Said's expression "There was always something wrong with how I was invented" leads us towards the writer in search of an entire ontology, a quest best exemplified, perhaps, by Franz Kafka.

The writer, in fact, is supremely ignorant of borders and their sustaining laws. One might almost say that the writer was "balkan" in his incapacity to be defined. If, as Said observes, we think of "the modern

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[62] This paragraph incorporates material from R Pine, *Minor Mythologies as Popular Literature*, p. 245.

[63] G. Steiner, *Extraterritorial: papers on literature and the language revolution*, p. 14.

[64] Ibid., p. 26. See E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 384: "Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm, an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered."

[65] E Said, *Out of Place*, p. 3.

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period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement",[66] then the writer typifies the age in his or her own spiritual alienation, anxiety or estrangement.[67]

It is part of my argument that our societies, and the borderlands between them, are populated more by people and ideas no longer "at home", than by those whose ontology is rooted, secure and assured – that exile, or an intermediate life, or a "between" life, in political, intellectual or sexual terms, is a more likely habitat, that its "focus" (to use the Latin word for a "hearth") is likely to be located not so easily *within* as *beyond.*

Central, rather than peripheral, to the concept of the writer at the frontier is the fact that the writer is not deracinated by the experience of exile, but is in fact rooted in that condition. Exile is so natural that it becomes *home*. However, it is not a permanent place, because the writer is constantly crossing the frontier, or threshold, and entering a new world, and thereby exiling himself momentarily from one displacement in favour of another. The writer, permanently in the borderland, must become his or her own self-defining and self-validating metaphor.[68]

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[66] E Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 173.

[67] I discuss this extensively in *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape*, in particular the chapters relating to his novels *Tunc* and *Nunquam.*

[68] See David Cooper, *Metaphor*, p. 210: "metaphor in some way *creates* the truth or reality it is about".

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UNTRANSLATABILITY OR A SYMBOL OF IN-BETWEENNESS AND HYBRIDITY: A REDEFINITION TOWARDS THE OPENING OF BORDERS

MELEK CHEKILI

Introduction

When one thinks about translation, one instinctively tends to associate it with an openness towards the Other, a willingness to understand what is the Other, and a crossing or a lifting of the "border" that exists between oneself and that Other. In that regard, the non-profit organisation *Translation Without Borders* prides itself on working towards a world in which there are no language barriers. Barriers, borders, are thus commonly seen as impediments, as a mirror reflecting a lack of understanding or misunderstandings, in short a shutdown. By mentioning the term “shutdown”’, one is tempted to bring forward the exceptional situation in which the world has been finding itself mired since early 2020. Today, under the constraints of a global pandemic, the world’s borders are proven to be more and more fragile. Living in these challenging times was supposed to bring the world together as one, to make its citizens aware of the limits of the human and the preposterousness of the idea of a superiority of a handful, over others, when facing the power of nature, of viruses, of sickness. The human being stands powerless, weak, in the face of this disease that struck unexpectedly, and which had tremendous effects on daily lives, economies, jobs, as well as physical and mental health. In a way, this era in which we, as humans, have been living, could have been a blessing in disguise, bringing the world together as one, in solidarity, acknowledging that no purported privilege is valid, no superiority can be claimed over anyone; in short, a reminder of the fact that we are all in this together. We are affected by a disease that knows no border, a disease that strikes indiscriminately, regardless of language, country, religion, race,

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ethnicity, gender. One could be tempted to say that the current pandemic is mimicking the way nations in the world have failed to be: open, borderless, cosmopolitan.

Drawing on these reflections embedded in the current events, I am tempted to wonder, in this chapter, on borderlessness and its customary association with the act of translation. I claim that untranslatability is not necessarily a blockade, but symbolises an openness towards new possibilities. I am thus extending the definition of untranslatability to refer, not to the impossibility of translation or the unavoidable mistranslation, but rather to a redefined translation. In that way, I will be opening the border of the rigid definition of translation itself. I claim that a proper redefinition of translation lies in a paradox, in acknowledging that translation is unable and not meant to translate. In that way, my new conception of translation as untranslatability aims at putting an end to the widespread stereotypes stemming from an alleged translatability of all things, and enables a recognition of the uniqueness of every situation. In that regard, beyond seeing untranslatability as a symbol of difference as Emily Apter (2013) puts it, I argue that untranslatability embraces in-betweenness and hybridity. In that perspective, untranslatability, by favouring hybridity, doesn't reflect closed borders and a refusal to fathom the Other's world, but rather an openness through the recognition of the untranslatability of each particular situation, in-between two languages, two cultures, two nations. Untranslatability as a translation in perpetual failure and transformation, seems to be the panacea for a less polemical consideration of borders. In this chapter, I will take the concept of untranslatability to be the perfect symbol of liminality, which doesn't entail a strict separation between languages and by extension, between nations, an imposed and reinforced border, but a recognition of their individuality indicating an honouring of oneself and the others. I argue that an acknowledgment of untranslatability is a recognition of those living "in-between", in the borderland.

Thus, I aim at analysing the question of translation in its broad sense in the context of borders. For that purpose, I intend to focus first on the overhaul of the concept of the border in two significant pieces of work: the eighteenth-century *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (De Graffigny 1747)[1], and the twentieth-century *Borderlands / La Frontera* (Anzaldúa, 1987), as well as the concepts of border consciousness and hybridity that pose a

[1] Françoise De Graffigny was a French novelist, playwright and salon hostess of the eighteenth century. She was initially famous as the author of *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747), and she then became the world's best-known living woman writer after the success of her sentimental comedy *Cénie* (1750).

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threat to the question of translation in its customary sense. Then, I will conclude by suggesting an approach to a redefined translation as untranslatability, analysing the latter concept, and studying its relationship to the question of borders.

The question of the border within Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* and Anzaldúa's *Borderland/La Frontera*: a new concept

Lettres d'une Péruvienne presents a young Inca princess, Zilia, from sixteenth-century Peru who is abducted and taken to eighteenth-century France under the wing of a French aristocrat in the context of the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards. Zilia tells the story of her captivity through letters that she writes to her beloved Aza, which are at the same time a travel in space and in time. The question of the border as a concept is significant in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, for it doesn't appear as a physical barrier, but rather a symbolic one expressed through the temporal and cultural shock that Zilia experiences when she arrives in eighteenth-century France. In that regard, throughout the novel, Zilia expresses her confusion and appears overwhelmed by the flood of emotions provoked by her arrival in a country, or even a world, which is completely foreign and strange. She is, for example, surprised by the way people dress up, far removed from what she was used to. This difference noticed by Zilia is what characterises the border: a border between her previous life and her host country that generates a multiplicity of feelings and emotions affecting Zilia.

In this part, I am focussing on the concept of the border and its impact on the figure of the migrant through a comparative approach in space and time with the contemporary work *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Even though *Borderlands/La Frontera* alludes to the personal experience of the author as a *mestiza* living at the border between the south-west of the US and Mexico, it is quite relevant in the context of the position of the migrant, the question of travel, immigration and exile reflected in *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. In fact, Anzaldúa states that borders are not only a geopolitical construct but also refer to philosophical, psychological and sexual limits. Borders, for her, aim at stabilising and shaping the imaginary separation between "I" and "the Other/the foreigner", "us" and "them". Thus, Anzaldúa's project seems to stem from a willingness to revolutionise the traditional idea that one has of the border as a separation, and to present it as a potential site of transformative possibilities and political resistance (Marciniak, 1987).

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It is within this context that a rapprochement can be carried out with Zilia's position as a migrant, for she also lives in a state of "in-betweenness" (Anzaldúa, 1987), which seems to translate the border as being a symbol of the cultural shock that she faces. Rather than a separation, the border is a way for her to discover the Other and, by the same token, herself, and to transform the border into an instrument of resistance and emancipation. Thus, I would like to mull over the position of Zilia as a "hybrid" migrant, hybrid taken not in the sense of Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, for Zilia is an indigenous woman. Rather, she appears as a "hybrid" in view of the ambivalence and duality that mark her life. Throughout the novel she is torn between the inevitable comparisons that she makes between her native country and the country of the Other: a constant swing linked in particular to the use of the French language.

First of all, the widely conceived definition of a "border" as a line separating two political or geographical areas, especially countries, seems too simplistic for me. In fact, even though one too often associates the concept of the "border" with a separation between two nations, it is much more than that in the context of *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* and *Borderlands/La Frontera*. As previously stated, for Zilia, the border manifests itself through the cultural shock that she experiences when she arrives in France, the temporal and spatial gap, the discovery of unknown objects, of a society marked by superficiality, in short, a border between "I" and "the Other". The border also appears under the shape of a dichotomy between Zilia, an emancipated, educated and cultured woman and the traditional, submitted, dependent and ignorant woman that she was at the beginning of the novel, prior to her forced migration. In the case of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa argues in her preface: "I am a border woman". As a feminist lesbian chicana writer, poet and critic who lived in the border between Texas and Mexico, Anzaldúa extends her conception of the border to philosophical, psychological and sexual limits. She assimilates the border to an open wound: "1,950 mile-long open wound dividing a pueblo, a culture, running down the length of my body, staking fence rods in my flesh, splits me, splits me" (p. 2).

The strong relationship between "border" and "body" created by Anzaldúa, through the metaphor of the wound is interesting and reveals the split that the concept of "border" exerts on her body but also on her identity. The anaphora "splits me" seems to demonstrate the dichotomy created by the border, that is not only physical but also psychological. In that regard, Anzaldúa introduces the concept of the "borderland" as a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary, constantly in transition. The borderland seems to be

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the panacea for fighting the dichotomy imposed by the border. It appears as the ideal spot for hybridity to blossom, for the acceptance of a multiplicity of subjectivities.

Hybridity in Graffigny's migrant vs Anzaldúa's *mestiza*

Graffigny's migrant, Zilia, embodies, in my opinion, the notion of hybridity. In fact, couldn't one claim that Zilia, through her singular position as a migrant, situated in-between two worlds, two cultures, two philosophies of life, symbolises the borderland par excellence, characterised by its hybridity? First of all, Graffigny created not only a sentimental main character, but also a character who reveals herself to be intellectual (Keita, 2004). It is the first sign of hybridity within the character of Zilia the migrant. Then, Zilia constantly oscillates between her attachment to the culture of her native country, Peru, that manifests itself in particular through the illusory link that she maintains through the letters that she writes to her beloved Aza, and her attachment to the culture of her host country, France. This ambivalence can be noted through the confusion stemming from the joy that she experiences in her new country while being with strangers, joy she only considers to be illusory, and that which is brought by the presence of her beloved Aza, who symbolises, in a way, a connecting point to her birth country:

> Céline and her brother can show me signs of friendship. […] It is the only time we can enjoy in peace the pleasure of seeing each other. […] I always find it a pleasure to be with them. . […] Alas! my dearest Aza, they do not know that I cannot be happy far from you […] (De Graffigny, p. 49).

The interjection "Alas" symbolises the rupture, the border in a way, which causes confusion to Zilia and represents the duality, the hybridity of her position as a migrant, enabling her at the same time to forge links in the host country but also to maintain links with her birth country.

As far as *Borderlands/La Frontera* is concerned, hybridity manifests itself through the figure of the "*mestiza*". A new logic is created converting a convergent mode of thinking, favouring separation, into a divergent one based on a disintegration of subject/object differentiation (Marciniak, n.d.). In other words, the *mestiza* appears in Anzaldúa's work as an ode to hybridity and a willingness to break with binary oppositions, namely between "I" and "the Other".

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The migrant as a "hybrid" or the creation of a border consciousness

I emphasise the fact that the opening of the border created by the cultural shock that Zilia experiences, is enabled through her intellectual interest and curiosity towards the Other, an openness which stems from an ambivalence rooted within the figures of both the migrant and the *mestiza*.

Typical ambivalence within the migrant and the *mestiza*

The ambivalence and the symbiosis of cultures can be noted in both De Graffigny's migrant and Anzaldúa's *mestiza*. In fact, at the end of the novel, Zilia seems no longer to be prey to a tension stemming from the opposition between her source culture and her target culture,[2] but rather, she seems to be favourable to some kind of symbiosis, exchange:

> You will teach me to know some of your sciences and arts, and taste the pleasure of being superior; I shall regain that pleasure by nurturing virtues in your heart which you do not know are there (De Graffigny, p. 117).

Zilia appears as an enlightened migrant, open to the specificities of the host country, and, at the same time, as an enlightening migrant, ready to teach her "virtues" and share the "resources" that she possesses with the host country. The alternation between the use of personal pronouns "I" and "you" in the previous quotation is interesting for it materialises a reciprocity, a mix, a hybridity between "I" and "the Other". By the same token, in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa seems to be favouring the ambivalence that is characteristic of the figure of the *mestiza*:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. [...] She learns to juggle cultures. [...] Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else...that third element is a new consciousness (p. 79).

The *mestiza*, just like the migrant, far from being a victim of her "hybridity" and her ambivalence, instrumentalises it in order to create a new active consciousness made possible by the process kickstarted, in my opinion, by Graffigny and Anzaldúa, and which consists in the acceptance of a non-unified subject. This new consciousness, as Anzaldúa argues, appears as a new way to behave, to perceive reality and oneself.

[2] One could make the rapprochement with the use of the terms "source" language and "target" language in the translation's jargon.

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Language as a symbol of hybridity and an instrument of freedom

In this regard, language plays a significant role in displaying the hybridity inherent in Graffigny's migrant and Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, and participates in the creation of a new consciousness no longer characterised by unity or binary opposition, but by an ambivalence, an "in-betweenness". First of all, the double use of English and Spanish in the work of Anzaldúa, reflects the linguistic situation of "chicanas"and translates the hybridity of the *mestiza*. Anzaldúa evokes, in that regard, what she calls "linguistic terrorism" in order to emphasise the predominance of her *mestiza* language, language that inhabits the border between Mexico and the US, and that beyond being a mere symbol of her identity, appears as a symbol of herself; she claims that she *is* her language, and that she needs to be able to take pride in her language in order to take pride in herself. For that reason, she believes that her tongue would remain illegitimate until she is able to speak Spanglish and doesn't have to choose between English and Spanish.

Thus, asserting and accepting the specificity of her language appears as a way to assert a new consciousness, a consciousness of her character as a *mestiza*. As far as Zilia is concerned, a transition took place between her use of the "Quipus", an ancient method used by Incas to record information, and her subsequent mastery of French in order to write letters to her beloved Aza. This transition, far from signifying an alienation of the migrant falling prey to her assimilation to the host country, symbolises, on the contrary, the affirmation of a new consciousness, a de-alienation, a re-appropriation of the language, namely French, that enables her to formulate her emancipation and her criticism of the host country, as well as to break with her previous isolation and powerlessness stemming from her linguistic inabilities.

What can be deduced from the use of the language is that, for Zilia and Anzaldúa, the re-appropriation of the language enables them to recover their voices, their resistance, their pride amidst their position as a migrant/*mestiza*. The ambivalence and hybridity of language (Spanglish for Anzaldúa's *mestiza* and active appropriation of French by Zilia), far from symbolising a weakness, emphasise the non-unity of the migrant and the *mestiza*, the border that constitutes their "multiplicity" (Bejarano, 1994), their main *raison d'être*.

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Towards the design of Translation as Untranslatability

Clearly, based on the experiences and the hybridity depicted by Graffigny and Anzaldúa, translation, taken in its customary sense, is not the path to be taken in order to fully recognise the position of the migrant or the *mestiza*. It seems that opening the border is not about translating it, but rather recognising its untranslatability. In order to understand and respect the Other, one needs, ultimately, to acknowledge and accept its uniqueness and untranslatability.

As Jacques Lezra puts it, "culture, to the extent that it becomes the location for untranslatability, and untranslatability, to the extent that it becomes synonymous with culture particularity, *add value universally*" (Lezra, 2017, p. 179). In other words, it is through the recognition of untranslatability that a respect and recognition of the individuality of every culture, every country, every language is possible; an individuality which is not synonymous with a strict separation between them, an imposed and reinforced border, an impossible communication, but a respect and honouring of oneself and the others. It is, as Lezra puts it, an "untranslatability-which-is-not-one", an untranslatability which is not tantamount to closing and impossibility but respect and genuine curiosity.

I am tempted to use this remark for the dismissal of stereotypes and exoticisation of foreign cultures and countries. It is paramount to acknowledging the inevitable mistranslations when trying to compare languages, media, countries, regions across borders. Perhaps the recognition of untranslatability represents a curiosity, a willingness to go beyond the unknown, the ignorance, and acknowledge the perpetual mistranslations or translation failures inevitably associated with the presence of borders.

Untranslatability and the question of belonging as non-belonging

Mentioning the border also brings to mind the idea of belonging to one side or the other of that border. Emily Apter argues that "the term translation […] in a sense signifies language in a state of non-belonging" (Apter, 2013, p. 36). However, I would like to claim that translation in its common sense does not aim at a desire for non-belonging, but rather a desire for belonging, a willingness to make what is being translated accessible in another language. The aim is to be able to belong through translation. Untranslatability, however, seems to be more suited to a state of non-belonging, for the recognition, for instance, of the individuality of one side of the border, or of the in-betweenness of those who live in the

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borderland, is tantamount to an acknowledgement of the impossibility of translating, and thus truly belonging. Untranslatability is the acceptance of the un-belonging; Lasalle and Weissmann argue that extraterritoriality is conceived as a way of escaping the entrapment of territory considered to be harmful or even deadly (Lasalle & Weissmann, 2014). I would like to apply this remark to untranslatability as being a way of escaping the entrapment of mass and forced translation that can also be considered harmful to the individuality of those who constitute the object of translation.

There has always been this underlying pressure revolving around belonging to one place, to one language, to one side of the border. But what if the new conception of translation as untranslatability overhauls the idea of belonging altogether and suggests a definition of belonging as non-belonging? Belonging would not be the attainment of some purported connection to a person or a place but, perhaps, refers to a journey, a perpetual displacement, some kind of unhousedness, a concept put forward by George Steiner in *Extraterritorial* which refers to writers “not thoroughly at home in the language of [their] production, but displaced or hesitant at the frontier” (Steiner, 1971, p. 4).

Conclusion: The final dilemma: untranslatability as differentiation or hybridity? Border crossing or border peeking?

Finally, one could conclude by arguing that what is at stake in the consideration of borders, is the thin line between differentiation and hybridity. On the one hand, denying the difference that exists between two sides of a border would deprive them of their individuality and singularity. On the other hand, supporting and encouraging differentiation strengthens the existence of that border that can be instrumentalised by both sides against each other. In a way, the panacea would not be a crossing of borders, but rather an openness towards what is on the other side. I have been suggesting a curiosity, a peek across the border. Borders are necessary insofar as they protect the individuality of those on both sides, as well as those living in-between, in the borderland, as I have depicted throughout this chapter in the figures of Zilia the migrant and Anzaldúa the *mestiza*. Rejecting a border crossing and a border lifting is a rejection of translation in its widespread conception, in favour of a translation as untranslatability. Translation as untranslatability enables an honouring of those who live in a state of in-betweenness and hybridity, and cannot be translated, albeit understood and respected in their individuality. Border

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peeking or untranslatability enables a communication, a conversation between borders. As Kwame Appiah puts it, “depending on the circumstances, conversations across boundaries can be delightful, or just vexing: what they mainly are, though, is inevitable” (Appiah, 2006, p. 38).

Thus, what matters is an endeavour to be open to the Other, to acknowledge their existence, to interact with them without being willing to “translate” them or being blind to their individuality. The panacea would be a willingness to be open to what is happening on the other side of the border while being aware that one should not cross it completely. It is that tension, that ambiguous relationship between both sides of the border, between two languages, on which my new definition of translation as untranslatability depends.

There might be a reason behind the use of the popular phrase invoking border-crossing in its figurative sense: crossing the line. One is told not to cross the line in any area of life. Not crossing the border, remaining in the realm of untranslatability, not putting words in the mouth of the Other, nor modifying their words to one’s own purpose, are rules which, for centuries, have been violated, mainly by the privileged and purportedly dominant white figures. Some voices and even lives are, for instance, being silenced or treated differently from those who have the privilege of being born with a colour of the skin that, for centuries, has been constructed as being a sign of superiority. Not crossing that border is a sign of respect, it is honouring the Other, and that is, ultimately, what I was aiming for in this chapter.

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THE SEMIOTIC SPHERE AND ITS DEMARCATION[1]

EEVA-LIISA MYLLYMÄKI

Introduction

In 2007 I wrote an article on how the "sphere of Europe" is seen, in an intercultural perspective, mainly from the outside (Myllymäki 2007). The question posed was how we can interact with the rest of the world in the sense of crossing the lines and finding new synergies and spaces for positive interactions. Globalisation was providing a new dimension, an opening, a possibility. In today's world, we need to ask if expanding globalisation still means keeping the doors open for people and ideas to come closer or whether there are greater distances and barriers that obstruct the way to better harmony between societies and cultures.

How we define the concept of a semiotic sphere and its limits has become more critical, if the surroundings and milieu are more diverse than they seem. The physical border in Europe and elsewhere becomes more visible as the flows of migrants are increasing. How do we deal with a variable semiotic system and its sphere? Demarcation can be understood as the act of creating a boundary around a place or a thing, setting or marking of boundaries or limits. It also has a connotation of a separation, a distinction. The delineation comes from within and without.

In physical terms, a border forms a division between historically and culturally separate spaces, and its meaning is simultaneously economic and political. An idea of globalisation and of a universe does not mean the vanishing of borders and different signs of demarcation. I am focussing on the aspect of the border instead of the interconnections. How do we track these lines of separation in a complex world? How do we interpret the meaning of a "border"? To what extent does the border

[1] A version of this essay appeared in the proceedings of the 13th World Congress of the International Association of Semiotic Studies, at Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania, 2017.

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represent a sign?

The interconnection between cultural spaces and the various means of interaction and encounter has been studied by many authors (Deledalle-Rhodes 1992, 2000; Block de Behar 2003). In the positive interpretation, it is open and seeks multiple channels. Contradictions and opposites add new ways into the interaction process. Juri Lotman's comprehensive concept of a semiosphere (1990) provides a theory of a synchronic semiotic space where interaction takes place between different sign systems and within a continuum of signs. Recognising the signs allows an extension towards and interaction with other cultures and the Other. The possibility of infinite semiosis is inherent in the Peircean semiotic theory.

Border as a limit

For Lotman (1990), the limits of the semiosphere are the critical point for separation and integration. The boundaries of the semiosphere are "the hottest spots for semioticizing processes". The notion of "boundary" is ambivalent: it both separates and unites. The boundary belongs to both the frontier cultures, to both contiguous semiospheres. It is a mechanism for translating and the place where "the external" is transformed into "the internal". Even more, it is a filtering membrane so that foreign texts become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while retaining their own characteristics (Lotman 136-137).

In Europe, a "Hotspot approach" has been introduced for the establishment of joint reception centres in frontline EU member states to identify and fingerprint migrants and refugees to facilitate the return of "irregular migrants". Officially-designated Hotspots would have the task of relocating refugees from war zones and filtering out people who have crossed the Mediterranean in search of better economic situations.

We can observe real-life hotspots in the European neighbourhood, and the construction of border fences around Ceuta and Melilla starting in the 1990s is an early example. To prevent the human flows of irregular migrants, high walls with barbed wire were erected. A study of irregular forms of human mobility in Europe and its Mediterranean neighbourhood and security measures at the EU's external and internal borders in Calais, the Greek-Turkish border and the island of Lampedusa concludes, however, that there is no way to stop the movement of people (Kynsilehto 2014: 141-142). Physical concrete walls and other less visible ways to monitor entry at crossing sites is a way of responding. A response, a reaction is always necessary to meet and encounter people coming from elsewhere. The border also becomes a threat but there is always a point of

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contact – whether one stays or goes back.

The concept of the boundary is central throughout Lotman's theory of the semiosphere. The function of any boundary or filter is "to control, filter and adapt the external into the internal". At the same time the notion of the boundary separating the internal space of the semiosphere from the external is just a rough primary distinction (Lotman 140, 138).

Border as a divided area

Gloria Anzaldúa describes life in the border culture (U.S./Mexican) as being in a constant state of transition: "To survive the Borderlands /you must live *sin fronteras*/ be a crossroads" (1999: 216). Its inhabitants are the prohibited and the forbidden. Borders as dividing lines, "a narrow strip along a steep edge", are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary: "This is my home /this thin edge of barbwire" (Anzaldúa 1999: 25).

In the frontier areas, semiotic processes are intensified because there are constant invasions from outside. The boundary is ambivalent and one of its sides is always turned to the outside (Lotman 141-142). We can conclude that there is also a two-way flow and penetration across the border. Even if it is not symmetrical, a special border culture becomes its own semiosis, a crossroads with various subsystems. But it functions mainly as a crossroads making links between discrete, autonomous cultural units.

As we take the border as a division, we find dividing lines, binarities and dualisms. We may take a look from the outside or from the inside vis-à-vis those lines. The variables can be opposites and they can be complementary in relation to the idea of a semiotic sphere to filter and adapt the external into the internal.

We may distinguish ambivalent variables when balancing the outside–inside binarism:

> *history–unpredictability, definition–indefinition, open–closed, inclusion–exclusion, peace–conflict, collective–individual, hope–fear, tolerance–control, answer–doubt, crossing–retreat, access–rejection, opportunity–challenge, bridge–wall, fiction–reality, new–old, communication–silence.*

When we think of divisions, be they physical or imaginary, we are dealing with opposites that are somehow incompatible in character. Still, we can

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try to identify a point that makes each a rupture and a link, keeping in mind any opportunity for connection and conversion. Being at the border grants us a chance to look at both sides. Being on either side is a closed position where contradictions seem real unless we find a way out.

Around the border: possibility of dialogue

Assuming the existence of the borders, we may turn to the realities around the borders circling various subsystems. Again, there are differing perspectives to defining those spaces that facilitate interaction and eventual dialogue. Demenchonok (2014) expands on this: cultures have boundaries or border zones as areas of contact and interaction with other cultures. Leaning on Bakhtin, the life of cultures takes place at the boundaries, an idea that is central to the concept of transculture. Thus, on the transcultural principle, they can transcend their borders. Furthermore, boundaries play a certain constructive role in protecting the uniqueness of each culture and in resisting the homogenising intrusion of globalisation (Demenchonok 2014: 125-127). The idea of transcending borders, however, would need closer scrutiny to be verified or to establish if it is more a utopia in the complex reality in which we live.

Transculture should not be an abstraction. Lois Parkinson Zamora (2006) approaches "transculturation" by referring to the processes by which meanings are produced from the contact of distinct cultural systems over time. Transcultural conceptions of the visual image condition present ways of seeing in Latin America, and these ways of seeing condition contemporary fiction. She studies inordinate relations which "are not co-ordinate relations; inordinate points are not deployed in ordered relation, as are coordinate points, but in irregular, decentered, asymmetrical relation" (Zamora 2006: xxii). She proposes the metaphor of the inordinate eye as an alternative to the "gaze" to recognise a reciprocal relation and exchange to encompass inordinate transcultural processes (Zamora 2006: xv, xxi-xxiii). Facing the other culture involves many angles and choices. Looking, seeing is an inevitable element of intercultural approaches as an entrance to comprehension, before other steps are taken.

Dualistic reconciliation

Is there a possibility of reconciliation, a chance of mediation instead of conflict? How do we close the diverging gaps that separate, distance and hinder the communication?

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response<–>resistance, proximity<–>remoteness,
love<–>violence, stability<–>chaos, humanity<–>hostility,
choice<–>no choice.

A contact, an exchange is the first step to meaningful communication. If we manage to create dialogue, we may take a step towards interaction and meaningful understanding.

Lotman (143-144) finds dialogue mechanisms in which the elementary act of thinking is translation and the elementary mechanism of translating is dialogue. There are still conditions for dialogue as it presupposes asymmetry, to be seen in the differences between the semiotic structures (languages) used by the participants in the dialogue. Asymmetry also assumes a degree of invariancy. Another necessary condition is the concern of both participants for the message and their capacity to overcome the inevitably arising semiotic barriers. The need for dialogue, the dialogic situation, precedes both real dialogue and even the existence of a language in which to conduct it; the semiosis situation precedes the instruments of semiosis.

Lotman recognises that the schematically outlined cycle may not be fully realised in the actual process of cultural contact. It demands favourable historical, social and psychological conditions. The process of "infection" needs certain external conditions to bring it about and it needs to be felt to be necessary and desirable. As with any dialogue, a situation of mutual attraction must precede the actual contact (Lotman 145). Binarism and asymmetry are the laws binding on any real semiotic system. The boundary is the crucial unifying factor for the unity of the semiotic space of the semiosphere, dividing the internal space of the semiosphere from the external, "its inside from the outside" (Lotman 124, 130).

Dialogism is present in Bakhtin's philosophy in relation to human communication and relationships. Dialogic relationships form the very foundation of all human activities, from the personal level to the most general level of dialogue among cultures. To Bakhtin, the life of cultures takes place on the boundaries and contact between cultures should be a dialogic encounter. Edward Demenchonok (2014: 85-88) describes this philosophy of dialogism as personalist: it is inseparable from the human persons between whom dialogue takes place. Dialogism is intimately related to the concept of the other and to I-other relationships, to "otherness". Dialogical relationships between I and the other constitute the structure of Being, understood as an "event". Dialogism thus combines diversity and co-existence. The principal borders lie inside the dialogic space. Another key concept in Bakhtin's dialogism is outsideness. It is

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only in the eyes of another culture that the foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly.

Laas poses a further question as to how the semiosphere, as a model for studying semiosis in complex systems, would function when resting on different kinds of dialogical foundations — comparing Peirce, Lotman and Bakhtin. Dialogue is a fundamental ontological feature of the semiosphere: internal relations between the subsystems and external relations with its environment are dialogic. A semiosphere based on Peircean dialogues would be an open system that exchanges information with its environment and co-evolves with it. This has implications for the semiosphere's binarism as its opposition with the environment is no longer clear-cut, nor is the nature of its boundaries. Translation mechanisms might be graded, vague and susceptible to temporal change. For Peirce, semiosis is a gradual progression toward a complete understanding (Laas 488-489). Thus we have an open-ended process to facilitate interaction under varying conditions. The level of understanding and the expectation of reaching understanding vary depending on the comprehensiveness of our own perspective on the process of signification.

Still a continuum: translation and other means

The border does not exclude the possibility of an indefinite semiosis. We just need to find those tools and means of dialogue that facilitate our interaction. In broad terms, translation is necessary even if it is complicated. To Ludwig Wittgenstein, "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (1922), but where are those limits? And what is the language? The contact between different semiospheres, a constant exchange, a search for a common language (Lotman 142) taking place on the frontiers is of paramount importance.

There is no empty space between cultures. The process of interaction continues even if it takes new forms and channels. Where do we track the points and surfaces of contact of a cultural interface? It is not yet an act of understanding the other but it is a condition and an existential situation in which the experience of understanding "the Other" is possible through crossing a line. It is a concrete communicative situation in space and time. From the semiotic viewpoint, it is the gradual convergence that is in focus in the search for the perception of the real nature of the Other's representation.

Even if our interest focuses on the process of convergence and continuum, there are also hints about limits in Peirce's texts. Emerson's verse "Of thine eye I am eyebeam" (The Sphinx, 1841) is used as a

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quotation in Peirce's explanation about symbols that grow. A symbol produces an endless series of interpretants. But every endless series must logically have a limit (Peirce 1998: 10, 323). By this logic of a limit Peirce means "an object which comes after all the objects of that series, but so that every other object which comes after all those objects comes after the limit also". "Thus the series of whole numbers is an increasing endless series. Its limit is the denumerable multitude" (in Peirce Edition Project 1998: 538-9).

Identity and alterity: fundamental for understanding

The concern for otherness brings us another, more intimate aspect of being related to others and overcoming our own closeness and self-reflection. Arthur Rimbaud's "Car je est un autre" (Lettre du voyant, 1871) symbolises the amplitude of choices of how to see and hear the other.

Julia Kristeva deeply analyses the question of identity and alterity making the relationship more precise: "Mon malaise à vivre avec l'autre — mon étrangeté, son étrangeté — repose sur une logique troublée réglant ce faisceau étrange de pulsion et de langage, de nature et de symbole qu'est l'inconscient toujours déjà formé par l'autre" (269). Her definition "l'étrange est en moi, donc nous sommes tous des étrangers" (24) constitutes "a semiology of uncanniness". It originates in the Freudian concept "unheimlich" (Friedrich Schelling) joining to the instant where something that is familiar to us becomes foreign and frightening. Here Kristeva (269-275) brings forward the idea that the sign is not arbitrary but has real importance. So the moment of recognising the strangeness is an awakening and an opportunity to know more. It can occur at a personal level but we may interpret it in a more universal way in intercultural situations.

The same question about being elsewhere, feeling strangeness is presented by Lisa Block de Behar:

> On ne peut voir de loin ni de près autrement qu'au travers d'écrans, de filtres qui rapprochent l'ailleurs et font du proche quelque chose d'étranger: du déjà-vu, du jamais-vu, indécidable. Où est ailleurs? Où n'est-il pas? Qu'est-ce qui est étranger? Qu'est-ce qui ne l'est pas?(1997: 86).

It is a moment of revelation which is relevant for understanding differences and combining the internal and the external. It is the look that determines but we have different ways of looking. Is there an inordinate eye that sees behind the look — and is it me or the Other who is looking?

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Finding a synthesis of signification with its intersections can make a continuum possible in a way that would transform seeing into being. Crossing the line(s) is the act of determination that always becomes more important than the division.

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Part Two:

Literature and Identity

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HARRY CLIFTON'S BORDERLANDS: "THE MAP OF HIS OWN BECOMING"

BENJAMIN KEATINGE

In *The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics* (2019), historian Diarmaid Ferriter lucidly describes the ambiguities and absurdities of the division between northern and southern Ireland. Of the partition line drawn up following Westminster's Government of Ireland Act of 1920, Ferriter observes: "Quite simply, the partition line was arbitrary [. . .] The new border's physical manifestations were ridiculous".[1] In more recent times, with the demilitarisation of the border following the Good Friday Agreement of 1998,[2] the border has returned to its original status as "'an invisible line'",[3] not demarcated and without customs or border infrastructure, despite the threat now posed by Brexit. Actor Stephen Rea speaks of the contemporary border as being "there, but not there; a line of imagination . . ." in a short film *Brexit: A Cry from the Irish Border* (2018)[4] and Ferriter alludes to the "desolate and confusing landscapes" of the border counties, their ambiguous terrain.[5] Meanwhile, Raymond Gillespie and Harold O'Sullivan argue that "The real significance of the Ulster border is not so much in its current [1989] political and administrative reality but rather that a variety of forms of boundary there persisted for so long in men's minds."[6]

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[1] Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics*, p. 10.
[2] The Good Friday Agreement (also known as the Belfast Agreement) was reached on Good Friday, 10 April 1998, after lengthy negotiations between the British and Irish governments and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland. It brought to a conclusion the first phase of the "Peace Process" which ended the "Troubles" in the North of Ireland.
[3] D.S. Johnson, quoted in D Ferriter, *op. cit*., p. 10.
[4] Quoted in *ibid*., p. 142.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 113.
[6] Raymond Gillespie and Harold O'Sullivan, "Introduction" in *The Borderlands:*

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This essay argues that invisible partitions of the mind are central to the poetry of Harry Clifton (b. 1952) and that the ambivalence existing in the north-south partition of Ireland pervades Clifton's treatment of that topic as well as being more broadly characteristic of his poetic outlook. His award-winning volume *Secular Eden* (2007) foregrounds an apparent oxymoron in its title; a humanistic secularism is set alongside theologically-conceived space which, in the title poem "Secular Eden" is imagined as Paris of the 1990s:

> Six o'clock in secular Eden -
> No-one will ever fall from grace
> Where the bells are electric, and the chimes
> Of a French municipal hall
> Preserve us in time.[7]

As we know, the French state insists on the secularism of *la République française* but historically, of course, Catholicism has been an influential force within the French body politic and the division between secularism (*laïcité*) and conservative Catholicism has been fundamental to the left-right division in French society from at least 1789. Whether Clifton is endorsing an idealised contemporary secularism in this poem is a moot point; arguably, Clifton's "Secular Eden" has an anodyne, flavourless quality suggestive even of a fallen world which is estranged from theological "reality".

Elsewhere, Clifton's poems explore the division between the worldly and unworldly, between spiritual and erotic experience and are illustrative of temporal temptations, and the flaws in human nature. Well-known poems like "Death of Thomas Merton", "The Poet Sandro Penna, in Old Age" and "Søren Kierkegaard" meditate on human fallibilities and foibles. In this respect, the remarkable poem "Dag Hammarskjöld" is perhaps the best example of Clifton's awareness of inner conflicts within gifted people:

> You will never be good enough, Dag Hammarskjöld –
> Exhausted man, I read in your book of changes
> Gethsemanes of sleepless transit lounges
> In the small hours, the missions that failed
> And left behind them everyday evil, good, […] [8]

Essays on the History of the Ulster-Leinster Border, ed. Raymond Gillespie and Harold O'Sullivan, p. 3.

[7] Harry Clifton, *Secular Eden: Paris Notebooks 1994-2004*, p. 96.

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Clifton's Dag Hammarskjöld is a victim of his own perfectionism, his "Lutheran" upbringing and "the arctic circle of [his] professional friends".[9] In the eyes of Clifton's poem, the extreme professionalism and rectitude of the Swedish diplomat and first UN Secretary-General is a recipe for personal unhappiness. Hammarskjöld's final mission tragically fails when he dies in a mysterious aeroplane accident in 1961 during the Congo crisis (1960–65). More widely, it is a poem in which the "forces multiply": peace and war, work and pleasure, sensuality and the spirit, morality and corruption.[10]

> Your table is empty, the dinner guests have gone –
> Your bachelor suite, too classical for the blues,
> Has only a chattering monkey on a chain
> To keep you from loneliness…. Why not telephone
> Korean fruitsellers, rent-boys below in the rain
> To visit you in your pain?[11]

By probing the impact of these forces on Hammarskjöld, Clifton sagely demonstrates the borderlands we all inhabit and which inhabit us.

In his short essay on "The Belfast Agreement" written to accompany three of the poet's Northern Irish border poems ("North Korea", "Deep Ulster" and "Praeger"), Clifton emphasises the similarities between "the abstract space of exile known as Paris" (where Clifton moved in 1994) and his more recent sojourns in mid-Ulster where his wife, novelist Deirdre Madden, is from.[12] For Clifton, the Northern Ireland of the Troubles had been "trapped" by "historical forces, unable to move forward, belonging to the past as East Germany once had" whereas a peaceful border promises an Ireland "of geography and weather, not history" where the poet as "cartographer of the spirit" can more readily inhabit this in-between zone.[13]

In poems gathered in *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* (2012), the demarcations of Clifton's own life are represented in that book's tripartite structure: the "Twenty-Six Counties", "Six Counties" and "Elsewhere". But the quest for "abstract space" or "pure existence"[14] unites in imagination these three compass points. Such imaginative space closely corresponds to the hypothetical "fifth province" postulated by Richard

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[8] Harry Clifton, *The Holding Centre: Selected Poems 1974-2004* , pp. 55-56.
[9] *Ibid*.
[10] *Ibid*.
[11] *Ibid*.
[12] Harry Clifton, "The Belfast Agreement: A Note and Three Poems" , p. 84.
[13] *Ibid*., 84-85.
[14] Harry Clifton, "Deep Ulster", in *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* , p. 55.

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Kearney and Mark Patrick Hederman in their influential journal *The Crane Bag* which was very much a 1970s cultural response to violence in northern Ireland. Richard Kearney wrote an inaugural editorial on "Art and Politics" to assert the journal's autonomy and sense of judicious uncertainty:

> The world is an imposition [. . .] Society is a legacy woven out of the creativity, insights, errors and stupidities of those who came before us. We are in it [. . .] *The Crane Bag* occupies no position because it recognizes that any particular place is partisan [. . .] *The Crane Bag* never quite succeeds in providing [a] totality of vantage. But, precisely because it is never complete, precisely because its borders are always shifting and disintegrating, nebulous and fragmented, it stands, or rather floats.[15]

Meanwhile, in a retrospective article on "Poetry and the Fifth Province", Mark Patrick Hederman would underline the importance of "unactualized spaces" such as the mythical "fifth province", a space for "druids and filí",[16] a realm or "secret centre [. . .] where all oppositions were resolved" and where "each person" would "discover" the geography of this place "within himself".[17]

Harry Clifton's sense of his own location within his poems and within the world very much tallies with Kearney's and Hederman's ideas. It is not insignificant that Clifton's *The Holding Centre: Selected Poems 1974-2004* (which gathers work from his six collections previously published by The Gallery Press)[18] takes for its title "The Holding Centre", a poem from *Comparative Lives* (1982):

> Ours is the prison that saves,
>
> The holding centre, its contradictions
> Collapsing upon themselves
> Like history, its tragic wards and kitchens
> Cut from the canebrakes, dissolving
>
> In stateless space.[19]

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[15] Richard Kearney, "Editorial II/Epidermis", pp. 90-91.
[16] A *filí* was a member of an elite class of poets in early Irish culture who ranked highly among the *Aes dána* or "people of the arts".
[17] Mark Patrick Hederman, "Poetry and the Fifth Province", p. 110.
[18] *The Walls of Carthage* (1977); *Office of the Salt Merchant* (1979); *Comparative Lives* (1982); *The Liberal Cage* (1988); *The Desert Route: Selected Poems 1973-88* (1992); *Night Train Through the Brenner* (1994).
[19] Harry Clifton, *The Holding* Centre, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

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By describing a refugee camp located on the border between Thailand and Cambodia, this poem bears metaphorical freight to represent the "abstract" or "stateless" predicament of the individual cast adrift on the seas of liquid modernity. The blurb to the original edition of *Comparative Lives* theorises a contrast between "those completely withdrawn from affairs of state" and "those completely involved in historical processes".[20] But as the theme of the first issue of *The Crane Bag* reminds us, neither total politics nor an isolated aestheticism are viable, "Art and Politics" co-exist with all their complexity and "contradictions". Clifton's "holding centre" should be viewed, then, as equivalent to the "necessary balance" which Mark Patrick Hederman identifies with the imaginative space of the "fifth province".[21]

The area of the Sperrins in mid-Ulster serves as the "holding centre" for Clifton within the six counties. He describes them as "that small mysterious mountain range in the middle of Ulster — ignored in itself, its east-west valleys and subsidences passed through perpetually, on the way somewhere else".[22] These mountains have the characteristic interstitial qualities that Clifton finds congenial. Overlooked and unvisited, their hermeneutic utility lies in their uncharted ruggedness; in Kearney's terms quoted above, they are "always shifting and disintegrating" and are "fragmented". What emerges in the "Six Counties" section of *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* is Clifton's sense of "ambivalent light" ("Deep Ulster")[23], the complexities of northern Irish "weather" and experience which, like "history" in "The Holding Centre", is full of "contradictions" but blends, nevertheless, into a nebulous "truth of the world" in "The Mist off the Lough".[24] These opaque landscapes serve to establish the shifting vantage points that Kearney more prosaically argues are necessary to describe "the truth of things".[25] The poems decline to simplify but feel their way against the current like an "Androgynous, ambivalent" eel, "slipping in and out / Of the local, the universal" ("The Eel").[26]

One can readily see an epistemological slipperiness here in which Clifton himself slips "in and out" of focus in the lyric voicing of his

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[20] Harry Clifton, *Comparative Lives*, inside cover flap.
[21] Mark Patrick Hederman, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
[22] Harry Clifton, "The Belfast Agreement: A Note and Three Poems", *op. cit.*, p. 85.
[23] Harry Clifton, *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[25] Richard Kearney, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[26] Harry Clifton, *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

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poems. In a sense, the "fifth province" / "holding centre" in and behind his poetry enables Clifton to adopt a vantage point "outside history", at a remove from historical processes, in order to better meditate on them. Clifton "is fascinated by a place of pure being which exists outside history" as Tom Paulin has suggested of Derek Mahon, whose searching lyricism and mastery of stanzaic form Clifton has inherited.[27] Indeed, "outside history" is a phrase constantly reiterated throughout Clifton's *oeuvre*.[28] An ecclesiastical parallel between the habitation of time/history and habitation in an extra-temporal realm of deeper reality can be found in the separation made in the liturgical calendar in Western Christianity between periods of Ordinary Time (history) and eschatological time of the Christmas and Easter observances. One might even say that these historical/theological time-schemes speak to a relationship between "place and death" in Clifton's writing, one that critic Thomas Docherty has argued is intrinsic to the aura or spirit of place.[29] Arguably, the diversity of places in Clifton's poems is underwritten by the singularity of their "mood, disposition" towards death, or their "*ethos* of mortality".[30] Witness, for example in the eschatological tenor of "Anabasis" from *Herod's Dispensations* (2019):

> And some day, come the summer, he will go
> Behind the veil of time and history
> Where the gods lie around, in smashed theogonies
> Of stone, [...][31]

or in the parallel spheres of spirit and matter in "Death of Thomas Merton". This important poem reimagines the American Trappist monk and poet as a "holy fool" whose peace-making "temporal pilgrimage" to Indo-China during the Vietnam War will, like Hammarskjöld's to the Congo, end in his own death before it has properly begun.[32] These influential travellers seem to voyage towards their demise.

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[27] Tom Paulin, "A Terminal Ironist: Derek Mahon", p. 83.
[28] For example, in "Latitude 5° N", the poem's speaker is a "man with no birth certificate, / Innocent of history", Harry Clifton, *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 36. "The Pit" meditates on "our time without history", Harry Clifton, *Herod's Dispensations*, p. 38. The speaker in "The Distaff Side" is "Divorced from history", Harry Clifton, *The Liberal Cage,* p. 11.
[29] Thomas Docherty, "The Place's Fault", p. 17.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] Harry Clifton, *Herod's Dispensations*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
[32] Harry Clifton, *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

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Clifton's poetry oscillates between an aura of particularity in a place and the escape from rootedness into "pure being" which finds its geographical analogy in his cosmopolitan citizenship of the world. For these reasons, many of his poems feature traversals and crossings in order to better foreground "being" versus particularity. Clifton's first selection of his poems, *The Desert Route: Selected Poems 1973-1988* suggests such traversal in its title, full of "Time and space / To be lost in", lines which imply that true location may lie beyond tangible "trade routes"[33] and, rather, in the "pure being" remarked on by Paulin. The poet's 1994 collection, *Night Train Through the Brenner* similarly foregrounds a crossing in its title:

> [...] travelling backwards
> Out of Germany, as the hours change,
> With the whole of history,
> In reverse, [...].[34]

In an even more expansive way, Clifton's elegy to his maternal grandmother "A Gulf Stream Ode" from *Secular Eden* (2007) crosses the Atlantic ocean and brings together Ireland and Chile.[35] The poem reminds us that the ocean currents which helped to ferry Clifton's parents to Ireland in the early 1950s (they had met in Antofagasta in northern Chile) are shared with other aquatic migrants, including the eel:

> Meanwhile though, unkillable in the grass –
> *Granny Allende, where on earth did you come from?* –
> An eel was writhing. Instinct told me
> Let the thing go. Coldblooded, let it melt
> In its own element, an elver-memory,
> Pure nacelle, of absolute Otherwhere,
> Epic or legend, to get back to once again.[36]

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[33] Harry Clifton, "The Desert Route," in *The Desert Route: Selected Poems 1973-1988*, p. 21.

[34] Harry Clifton, *Night Train Through the Brenner*, p. 67.

[35] Clifton's parents met in "the desolate nitrate port of Antofagasta in northern Chile, on the edge of the Atacama desert where [his] father, an engineer from Ireland, had overseen the water supply for three years": Harry Clifton, "Coming Home", p. 7.

[36] Harry Clifton, *Secular Eden*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

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The North Atlantic here becomes an abstract space of "pure being" for what he elsewhere calls "the darkness of origins" symbolised by the eel.[37] Clifton's South American heritage features strongly in the "Elsewhere" section of *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* and such poems as "Mother Tongue" and "The Rain Shadow" exude an exotic and liminal atmosphere "Not of this world",[38] very much an "absolute Otherwhere". Fintan O'Toole describes Clifton's *oeuvre* as one of "aftermaths, hauntings and returns"[39] and thus defines the spectral restlessness of these poems, their oscillation between particularity and expansiveness, history and being. The overlap of place, death and haunting in the title poem of *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* is particularly noticeable. The execution of the Civil War combatant, Captain Lemass, is a grisly event that brings together the specificities of "Family history" (the Irish Civil War of 1922-23 was a notably internecine conflict) and the anonymity of "unmarked plots".[40] Life and death confront one another in the person of Noel Lemass whose final resting place is "the Dublin mountains" and the poem, again, is one of traversal, in this case through the decades from 1923, 1943 to 2003 (the poem's sections being sequentially titled), as the poem moves across "the silences, the years" since Irish independence.[41]

We must insist here on the extent to which the poet is "the map of his own becoming" in the strategic distancing of his lyric voice.[42] As Gerald Dawe suggests, "Clifton's sense of himself 'in' the poems is carefully mediated [. . .] His poetry is 'objective', but not in the customary way we use this term."[43] The natural observational acuity of the poet enables him to situate himself, interstitially, as it were, "Between word and thing", drawing on "will and language" and thus bringing to bear "moral pressure" on the facts of the world ("A Swallow").[44] In a debatable reading of Clifton's perspectival approach, Ailbhe McDaid makes an unconvincing

[37] Harry Clifton, "The Origins of the Tango," in *ibid*., p. 50.

[38] Harry Clifton, "Mother Tongue" in *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass, op. cit.*, p. 81.

[39] On the back cover of *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass*.

[40] Harry Clifton, "The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass," in i*bid*., p. 44. Captain Noel Lemass, brother of future Taoiseach Seán Lemass and veteran of the Easter Rising, was murdered by Free State troops in 1923 and buried in the Dublin mountains.

[41] *Ibid*., pp. 44-46.

[42] Harry Clifton, "The Map of Becoming," in i*bid*., p. 72.

[43] Gerald Dawe, "Writers from the South of Ireland 4: Harry Clifton", pp. 14-15.

[44] Harry Clifton, "A Swallow" in *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass*, *op.cit*., p. 53.

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distinction between "individual traumas of memory and loss" and "[t]he larger context" of historical processes in Clifton's work.[45] But surely what makes Clifton's poetry so compelling is the extent to which he imbricates his own sense of "trauma and loss" with this "larger context", be it Irish or South American. While McDaid calls into question what she terms "his central ethic of marginalisation", other readers may discern instead an astute focalising technique which lends his poetry its authority and power.[46]

In Harry Clifton's first full collection, *The Walls of Carthage* (1977), we observe the poet's own "self-positioning",[47] to use McDaid's term, and his awareness of such focalisation. For example, in "Upstairs Child", the poet as child feels ostracised from, but superior to, the adult world around him:

> Later, I go away
> Upstairs to my own room. Lights out,
> I have all the time in the world
> To compose myself, and quite self-consciously
>
> To mince and mimic late into the night.[48]

Likewise, the early poem "Picaro" strongly implies a self-conscious artistic strategy by which the poet nurses "his self-sufficiency" and defends that autonomy which enables him to frame "his social story".[49] Like an unnamed narrator in a novel, the poet, even at his most "'objective'", nevertheless conserves his artfulness as fabulist or story-teller. What must be conceded therefore is that Clifton's "self-positioning" is consciously adopted, for better or for worse, and that the poems themselves contain a reflexive awareness of their perspectival techniques.

All of this is directly connected to "the social story" of Irish poetry in the 1970s and 1980s when Clifton began to publish. Some of Clifton's earliest published poetry appeared in *The Honest Ulsterman* in the mid-1970s[50] and his chapbook *Null Beauty* (1975) was published by

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[45] Ailbhe McDaid, *The Poetics of Migration in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, pp. 154-155.
[46] *Ibid*., p. 159.
[47] *Ibid*., p. 158.
[48] Harry Clifton, *The Walls of Carthage*, p. 10.
[49] *Ibid*., p. 19.
[50] Clifton published: "The Roof-Strippers" and "Blue Room" in *The Honest Ulsterman*, 42-43 (March-July 1974), p. 43; "Carnival Sickness", "Picaro" and "Metempsychosis" in *The Honest Ulsterman* 50 (Winter 1975), pp. 118-120; "The

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the same imprint, Ulsterman Publications. Retrospectively, it is possible to interpret the gradual emergence of Clifton's poetry against the backdrop of northern and southern poetic identities at a time when the Troubles were at their most intense and when, as Gerald Dawe reminds us, "The generation of [James] Simmons, [Seamus] Heaney, [Derek] Mahon, and [Michael] Longley took the full force of [. .] critical attention".[51] The prominence of these northern voices was affirmed by the anthology *Poets from the North of Ireland* (1979) edited by Frank Ormsby who also edited *The Honest Ulsterman* at this time. Clifton's work, however, would later be anthologised in *The Inherited Boundaries: Younger Poets of the Republic of Ireland* (1986) in which editor Sebastian Barry asserted:

> It can not be the same to grow up within the inherited boundaries of the Republic, as to manage a like feat inside the markers of the Northern province, and this is clearly reflected in the two poetries. Paul Muldoon, Tom Paulin, Gerald Dawe, Medbh McGuckian, and their confrères and consoeurs, do not share a sensibility with these poets of the South.[52]

Barry selected six poets, plus his own work, as representative southern voices: Michael O'Loughlin, Matthew Sweeney, Aidan Carl Matthews, Thomas McCarthy, Dermot Bolger and Harry Clifton. What seems strange from this distance is the extent to which Barry felt it necessary to delineate a distinctive southern aesthetic, indeed a separate "story" of "the Republic" rather than of the whole "island".[53] The polarisation of that moment bespeaks a cultural partition which Clifton's early Ulsterman publications and much later collection, *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* (2012) traverse. Nevertheless, that later collection retains a division between the "Six Counties" and "Twenty-Six Counties" thereby acknowledging the separation of north and south.

Indeed, it is partition in the broadest sense that can best make sense of Clifton's poetic projects. As Thomas Docherty has argued in his

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Side", "Manichee Women", "Virgins", "Eve of Marriage", "Old Men's Praises" and "Paragraph" in *The Honest Ulsterman* 51 (January-April 1976), pp. 42-46; "The Desert Route", "Latitude 5° N", "Office of the Salt Merchant", "The Past", "Moving Pictures", "Trial Marriage" and "Middle C" in *The Honest Ulsterman* 57 (October-November 1977), pp. 12-18; "The Old City Dam" and "Savannah in Bloom" in *The Honest Ulsterman* 63 (July-October 1979), pp. 28-29.

[51] Gerald Dawe, "History Class: On 'Northern Poetry'", p. 320.

[52] Sebastian Barry, ed., *The Inherited Boundaries: Younger Poets of the Republic of Ireland*, pp. 13-14.

[53] *Ibid*., p. 14.

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essay "The Place's Fault":

> A border can be a fault-line; but it is a fault or an imperfection that is necessary for the perfect idea or image of the complete and autonomous nation state as such; and thus it both is and is not "faulty," broken or fractured.[54]

Docherty goes on to suggest that the "logic of place" is "actually dependent on my being always already 'foreign' or always containing within myself some element of that which comes from 'outside my borders'".[55] This sense of incompleteness as an inescapable condition of the "logic of place", one that militates against any idea of rootedness and national belonging, is a useful means by which to elucidate Clifton's precarious sense of his own relation to Irish national identity. Put simply, places are faulty, by definition, and so the writer can only give expression to the ineluctable fault-lines of nation and self.

As we have seen, the epistemology of Harry Clifton's poetry is moulded around his focalising of the gap between self and world which is underlined by his sense of the gulf between *Ireland and its Elsewheres* (2014) as his Ireland Professor of Poetry lecture series was entitled. We witness these fault-lines being creatively exploited time and time again in Clifton's poetry. His poem "Ireland" evokes a scene in which the speaker is "Offshore, islanded" and looking "across at Ireland" from a safe distance which gives an opportunity for "Wild seed", in a place where "The law ends".[56] Similar poems in *Comparative Lives* (1982), some of which feature "pickups, prostitutes"[57] also reflect on the boundaries between the moral and legal order ("the law of the land")[58] and what lies beyond it. There is a separation here between "the conscious life of Ireland", with its industrious respectability, and many other lives.[59] The poet ranks himself among the alienated others rather than the "early risers"[60] and he is unable to "be whole"[61] in the insular Ireland of the 1980s. He knows "The home stretch" too well, being familiar with "the nature of the traps".[62] Such

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[54] Thomas Docherty, "The Place's Fault", p. 22.
[55] *Ibid*., p. 26.
[56] Harry Clifton, *Comparative Lives*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[57] Harry Clifton, "The Student", *ibid*., p. 31.
[58] Harry Clifton, "Droit de Seigneur", *ibid*., p. 32.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Harry Clifton, "Early Days", *ibid*., p. 10.
[61] Harry Clifton, "Apropos of Falling Sleet", *ibid*., p. 12.
[62] Harry Clifton, "November", *ibid*., p. 57.

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wariness resurfaces even in much later poems, for example, in the sequence *Portobello Sonnets* (2016) which is full of the anxiety of the returning migrant; Clifton returned to live in Ireland in 2004, having spent a decade in Paris between 1994 and 2004. He sees himself and his wife as "Latest of blow-ins, ready to try again" and these efforts to make an accommodation with "home waters" serve to underline how fault-lines evoked in his Irish homecoming are deeply embedded.[63]

The elsewheres examined in Clifton's three lectures as Ireland Professor of Poetry are the culturally-adjacent realms of Britain, continental Europe and the USA but his early poetry explores locales in Africa and Asia to give a more far-reaching account of worlds beyond Irish horizons. In an interview Clifton has said:

> The city of Paris rubs off in a different way than the American Midwest, the Jos plateau of Nigeria differently than the mountains on the Cambodian border. Having lived and written in all those places and many others, it is no longer the difference between them that interests me, but what they share in terms of a common human experience.[64]

But arguably, the poems written from African and Asian experience speak less of the universality of human lives and more of the dissonance suggested in the title of Clifton's third full collection, *Comparative Lives*; in other words, these poems emphasise social and moral differences, rather than similarities, so that in many of them we sense that we are a million miles from "the conscious life of Ireland" and the varied forms of "civic rationality" (work, family life, political engagement) which the poems dissect.[65]

Clifton's antennae are alert to the contrasting social strata within the regions and cities he has visited. "Night in the Chinese Quarter" of Bangkok, for example, evokes a "an invisible wall / of city within city". The poem takes a Western gaze at this urban quarter, one that seems beyond "morality", a place of "Gambling dens" in the seedy backstreets "Where virgins are sold to old men".[66] A not dissimilar feeling of moral lassitude can be found in some of the poems with African settings. In the centre of Nigeria, far from any international border, the poet feels engulfed by the "moral wilderness" around him.[67] Indeed, "The Niger Ferry" shows how the malaise of his African surroundings dovetails with a personal sense of

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[63] Harry Clifton, *Portobello Sonnets*, p. 9.
[64] Harry Clifton, "Irish Poetry and the Diaspora", pp. 11-12.
[65] Harry Clifton, "Reasons of State", *Comparative Lives*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[66] *Ibid*., p. 42.
[67] Harry Clifton, "Gold and Base", *Office of the Salt Merchant*, p. 38.

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ennui as he transitions fruitlessly "in search of a Rubicon / Dividing, like this peaceful river, / Past from future."[68] He is "Between two shores"[69] and this feeling of "suspended animation" pervades *Office of the Salt Merchant* (1979). In "Loneliness in the Tropics", he walks to "the end of the airfield" but there is "No one coming home"; condemned to "restlessness", only "the village whorehouse" offers sanctuary.[70] The Jos plateau has been described as a "hill fortress"[71] or "hill refuge" which is "isolated" and "inaccessible"[72] and such connectivity as exists appears to belong to others.

However, we should beware of reducing Clifton's poetry, early or late, to neat binaries between, for example, East and West, cosmopolitanism and home ground, or bohemian *tristesse* versus civic rationality. Clifton's diverse *oeuvre* considers Ireland *and* its elsewheres / others, frequently together. Of his preoccupation with barren landscapes, such of those of the Jos plateau in Nigeria, he has stated that: "I use the word desert in a positive sense. For me the desert is a place of clarity and emptiness, and a point of departure; I don't see it in terms of desolation."[73] It is thus instructive to consider a retrospective poem like "Vladimir and Estragon" which reimagines Beckett's iconic duo from *Waiting for Godot* as tramps in an African landscape:

> Once, in the grass of September
> At four thousand feet, among whites who remained
> From a mining bonanza, we stood where the plateau shelves
> And jungle begins. It was nightfall, I remember,
> And the barking of primates, desolate after rain,
> Came floating from graveyards of lorries, an overgrown myth
> Of money and power, colonies bled to death.[74]

These lines searchingly reflect the postcolonial vista of the Jos plateau where a mining boom has left the landscape scarred with industrial debris as reminders of colonial greed and power.[75] It is a desolate yet revealing

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[68] Harry Clifton, "The Niger Ferry", *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] Harry Clifton, *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[71] David C. Tambo, "The 'Hill Refuges' of the Jos Plateau: A Historiographical Examination", p. 208.
[72] Ibid., p. 201.
[73] Harry Clifton, "Interview", p. 42.
[74] Harry Clifton, "Vladimir and Estragon", *The Liberal Cage*, p. 12.
[75] Michael J. Alexander informs us that, on the Jos plateau: "Exploitation [for tin] reached its peak in 1943 [. . .] from this point production has fluctuated along a downward spiral [. . .] With the collapse of the International Tin Agreement, in

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vista. We should recall that Beckett's original play was entitled *En attendant Godot* which more properly translates as "while waiting for Godot" and that the play itself contains certain transitions within its static structure: the tree on stage mysteriously sprouts leaves between Act 1 and Act 2 and Pozzo becomes inexplicably blind. In "Vladimir and Estragon", Clifton is both "lost and found". Rather than simply "waiting and waiting" without hope, he is "Lost and redeemed, with the gold of experience".[76] For these reasons, Clifton's sense of place, to recall Thomas Docherty's words, "both is and is not 'faulty'". "Vladimir and Estragon" is a poem crossing many borders via intertextual reference to a play written in French by the expatriate Beckett and it was published while Clifton was living in Italy. This triangulation of reference points makes it much more than just a tragi-comic retrospective on "Somewhere in Africa".[77] It is a polyvalent poem by virtue of its multiple border crossings.

Undeniably, Clifton's poetry tends towards contrapuntal contrast of moral and social realms. "Death of Thomas Merton", for example, is a poem divided by a volta which separates its two halves. Trappist monk Thomas Merton arrives in Bangkok "In late October, Nineteen Sixty-eight" and his chauffeur-driven journey next day takes him "To the other side of the city . . ." seemingly from corruption ("Hippies frisked for heroin", "military fleshpots") to spiritual destinations ("Buddhas", "saffron robes", "monk and lama").[78] Equally, the differences between northern and southern Europe are important as a dividing line in Clifton's work and they provide the predominant structural principle for *Night Train Through the Brenner* (1994) in which Italian poems of Part One are mainly separated from more northerly perspectives in Part Two containing such poems as "Søren Kierkegaard", "Dachau, April 1990" and "The Nihilists". In Clifton's work, "a cold repose / In the North" ("Vaucluse")[79] often contrasts with "The dead heat, the white haze" of the South ("Letter from the South").[80]

However, this being said, we must again insist on the range of perspectives offered in such poems as "Where We Live" and "Night Train

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1985, production [. . .] almost completely ceased. The result of the last 80 years of commercial mining has been to leave a legacy of damaged or derelict landscape covering some 316 square kilometres of the plateau": Michael J. Alexander, "Reclamation after Tin Mining on the Jos Plateau Nigeria", p. 44.

[76] Harry Clifton, "Vladimir and Estragon", *The Liberal Cage*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 12.

[78] Harry Clifton, *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[80] Harry Clifton, *Night Train Through the Brenner*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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Through the Brenner" both of which illustrate the broad geographical and historical sweep of Clifton's imagination. The former poem implies that the logic of place is "in ourselves / From the beginning" and that we navigate "Tropic suns, or the greys of Ulster" on personal terms.[81] The latter poem, written in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the changes in Europe in the 1990s, enjoys its moment of political optimism "at the dawn of humanity" in which the "two hundred years of revolution" between 1789 and 1989 seem but a blink of an eye.[82] At such moments, differences between East and West, or North and South become less insistent despite contrasts in historical experience.

In conclusion, it must be acknowledged that Clifton accepts the frontiers of self and the essential boundedness of the self notwithstanding such moments of liberation and transcendence. His poem "The Literal Version" testifies to an essential "solitude" alongside "a longing to connect".[83] It is dedicated to Bosnian poet Ranko Sladojević whose work Clifton translated for *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia* using an English crib from the original Bosnian.[84] As Clifton's poem declares, much is "lost in translation" and another's experience or suffering may not be reachable in its "Literal" form.[85] Clifton's imaginative transmigrations are all the more remarkable, then, for strongly communicating the "pain" and "loneliness" of others, for crossing borders, even when human predicaments, in literal terms, cannot be fully known.[86]

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[81] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

[83] Harry Clifton, *Secular Eden*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[84] Chris Agee, ed., *Scar on the Stone: Contemporary Poetry from Bosnia.*

[85] Harry Clifton, *Secular Eden*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

[86] Harry Clifton, "Dag Hammarskjöld", *The Holding Centre*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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BORDERED SELF: HISTORY AND IDENTITY IN ELIZABETH BOWEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

SIRSHENDU MAJUMDAR

> The Greek word for "return" is nostos. Algos means suffering. So nostalgia is the suffering caused by an unappeased yearning to return. To express that fundamental notion most Europeans can utilise a word derived from the Greek (nostalgia, nostalgie) as well as other words with roots in their national languages […] Often they mean only the sadness caused by the impossibility of returning to one's country; a longing for country, for home.[1]

> Change […] wreaks a personal injury, a tearing out of pages from one's own story; so much so that, knowing how wide and drastic the scope of change is, we may not dare to risk a real-life return, but instead prefer to brood on those scenes in memory — remembrance — which is more insidious, more in-growing, but more safe.[2]

I

This essay will concentrate on Elizabeth Bowen's autobiographical writings with an emphasis on her most celebrated one, *Bowen's Court*, published in 1942. The present volume is concerned with different facets of borders and borderlands which imply that borders always throw up questions of identity and exile, self-imposed or forced. In keeping with the volume's extended preoccupation, Bowen's autobiographical works can be seen as a fascinating terrain to explore the questions of unsettled nationality and cross-border identity. The larger context of *Bowen's Court*, and indeed, much of Bowen's significant writing, directly or indirectly, is

[1] Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*, p. 3.
[2] Elizabeth Bowen, "The Cult of Nostalgia", p. 99.

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the historical position of the Anglo-Irish, the class to which Bowen herself belonged, since the early twentieth century.

Speaking of the Irish nationalist movement that underwent many turns and twists during its prolonged period, Frank Kermode observed that "[t]he politics of the period were such that many in Ireland felt divided loyalties." In view of the jagged historical-political movement, the position of the "Irish artist" was so "ambiguous" that "as an artist" he felt that his "nationality" was "uncertain", that he might feel to be a "double man in his art", riven as he was between his location in Ireland, and England, or any of the European nation-states. Kermode concluded on a slightly melancholic note that "[t]o be thus conflicted was the fate of the Anglo-Irish."[3]

The position of the Anglo-Irish, or of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy — to use the more politically nuanced, if not pejorative, appellation current since the eighteenth century — had become precarious since the beginning of the twentieth century with successive legislation on land, such as the Wyndham Act of 1903 and the Birrell Act of 1909. The power of the Anglo-Irish was principally founded on land as settlers since the Cromwellian days, or even earlier, land that they received or confiscated from the native Irish. In the Free State, after Ireland had won freedom from British imperial rule in 1921, this ethnic minority had reduced from nearly a quarter of the island's population in the pre-independent days to 7.4 percent of the entire population as revealed in the census of 1926; the general nature of insecurity can be gauged from the fact that the Church of Ireland had to send a delegation to Michael Collins, minister in the Dáil [the lower house of the Irish parliament], on 12 May 1922 to inquire "if they were permitted to live in Ireland, or if it was desired that they should leave the country". Collins proposed that they were welcome to stay, and assured them of protection.[4]

On the ground, however, the situation had become quite precarious. "Between 6 December 1921 and 22 March 1923, one hundred and ninety two Big Houses were burnt down"[5] out of nearly two thousand existing at that time. The burning of the Big Houses really started after the

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[3] Frank Kermode, "The Anglo-Irish Hyphen", p. 98. Originally delivered as the Edward Said Memorial Lecture at Columbia University, March 2006.

[4] This is described in Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, 1886-1922*, p. 288; cited in Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002*, p. 98.

[5] Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1*, p. 279, cited in Terence Brown, *Ireland*, p. 99.

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Black and Tans[6] started brutal "reprisals; burning villages, plundering, shooting innocent civilians." The nature of the disturbances and the attitude of the Anglo-Irish were, for that matter, varied greatly. For example, "[w]hile Lord French was reigning in the Viceregal Lodge, giving constitutional approval to the policy of repression [of the Irish rebels], his suffragette sister, Mrs Despard, was making Sinn Féin speeches in the streets of Dublin", remarks Mark Bence-Jones. He also argues that the IRA rebels burnt some houses purely for strategic reasons — that these houses should not serve as camps for the police and the military.[7] Such was the situation.

Julian Moynahan explains that the Anglo-Irish landed gentry were in a kind of double bind during the Troubles because they could afford to support neither the Black and Tans nor the IRA rebels, for supporting anyone entailed retribution from the other.[8] Bence-Jones also notes that even loyalists gave the British army little help, as the army could not ensure their safety. In such a situation, Irish loyalists maintained a neutral position.[9] The burning down of Big Houses[10] was not solely the reaction to centuries of oppression of the native Irish by the Ascendancy; it was provoked by the fact that politically, the Ascendancy were pro-Treaty and anti-republican.[11] But more than politics, it was the Anglo-Irish distance from Irish cultural nationalism that had led to this kind of

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[6] In 1920, in the face of attacks from the IRA, many in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) began to resign leading to a shortfall in personnel. The English authorities began recruiting from amongst retired ex-servicemen to supplement the shortfall. There seems to have been a shortfall in the traditional bottle-green uniform and they donned a combination of black and khaki. The name was applied after the hounds of a famous hunt as much as in terms of their sartorial features.

[7] Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, pp. 187-197.

[8] Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*, p. 231.

[9] Bence-Jones, *Twilight,* p. 196.

[10] Some others like Lady Gregory were threatened; during the Troubles. Lady Gregory defied her tenants' threat to shoot her through the window and continued to sit at her window as she was wont to do every evening. Yeats celebrates this in the poem "Beautiful Lofty Things"': "Augusta Gregory seated at her great ormolu table, / Her eightieth winter approaching: 'Yesterday he threatened my life. / I told him that nightly from six to seven I sat at this table, / The blinds drawn up."

[11] The Anglo-Irish Treaty, signed between Irish delegates and the British government on 6 December 1921, seemed a compromise to the more radical members of the IRA who were unhappy with the absence of the word "republic" in the Treaty and the acceptance of the partition of the country with Ulster remaining under Britain. This precipitated the civil war between the pro- and anti-Treaty factions.

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insecurity in the Free State. In Terence Brown's eminent analysis, the Anglo-Irish, apart from a few individuals, had dismissed the nationalist cause contemptuously with characteristic snobbery, resulting in the counter-reaction on the part of Irish Irelanders, the denial of full "spiritual communion" to this colonising minority of Protestant faith. The end result, in the Free State, was a shared sense of "isolation and political impotence".[12]

County Cork was one of the centres of the Rebellion of the anti-Treaty republicans; it was in north County Cork that the first Henry of the Bowen family had obtained several acres of land for his services to Cromwell, and a later Henry, "Henry III", had built Bowen's Court in 1775. In her essay of 1942 "The Big House", Bowen traces a kind of psychological tussle, as it were, in the settlers who felt alienated from the native Irish: "[T]he big house people were handicapped, shadowed and to some extent queered — by their pride, by their indignation at their decline and by their divorce from the countryside in whose heart their struggle was carried on."[13] The isolation, insecurity and anxiety of the landed gentry of the Big Houses had their literary reflections in some of the fictions written by Anglo-Irish writers such as Somerville and Ross and Elizabeth Bowen. Somerville and Ross' *The Big House of Inver* and Bowen's *The Last September* are exemplary works in this genre, as it were. While Somerville squarely shifts the blame on the Anglo-Irish inhabitants of the house for its downfall, Bowen takes on a different view.

In the 1929 Preface to the American edition of *The Last September*, Bowen acknowledges that the novel was "nearest to my heart" and explains its "factual" background as set during "the Troubled times", in 1920, though the events are "fiction with the texture of history". But more importantly, and very few writers have so candidly done this, she explores the ambiguous position of the Anglo-Irish during those troubled times — the pull between the "inherited loyalty (or at least, adherence) to Britain […] to which they owed their 'Ascendancy' lands and power [and] their own temperamental Irishness." At the same time, the novel is also closer to her own life, and in the burning down of Danielstown, the big house of the novel, she anticipates the dissolution of her own family house, Bowen's Court. In a remarkable passage of personal catharsis, she observes: "I was the child of the house from which Danielstown derives. Bowen's Court survived — nevertheless, so often in my mind's eye did I see it burning that the terrible last event in *The Last September* is more real than anything I have lived through."[14]

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[12] Brown, *Ireland* , pp. 95-98.
[13] Bowen, "The Big House", p. 27.
[14] Bowen, "The Last September", pp. 123-126.

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II

Bowen delineates some of the features of the Anglo-Irish Big House in "The Big House"; she tells us that the big house is indeed a paradox, as it is not really big, but probably its "height" in a country of low buildings for which the word "Big" was applied. But more significant is the presumption that the appellation may be the result of "hostility" provoked by the pride, the arrogance, and the self-centredness of its inhabitants. She defines this bigness in terms of the temperament of the inhabitants, their "impersonality", their adoption of a style that was "humanistic, classic and disciplined", imported from Europe. It is this mode of life and manners that differentiated them and brought upon them a kind of self-imposed exile from the larger native populace who lived a life very distant from that in the big houses. At the same time, the isolation of the Anglo-Irish, who inhabited these houses for generations, was exacerbated by what Bowen terms their life of "mystery" lived under a "spell",[15] as it were. It is the spell of the past, of a tradition of being real and imagined superiors and inheritors of a different culture, which they held on to above everything.

The Big House, was thus a kind of symbol of their supremacy; their attachment to it was "obsessive" because "they had begun as conquerors and were not disposed to let that tradition lapse." Bowen thus explores the psychological consequences of a caste that had been "imposed on Ireland […] however ignobly". Implicitly, she also attempts to trace the fear lurking in their minds. "Is it suspicion, hostility, irony that keep so much of Ireland away from the big house door?" she asks.[16]

While in this query she hints at the hospitality of the Anglo-Irish of the big houses, she attempts to elide this loaded historical question by sliding into a cultural presumption that the people, which would mean the Irish Catholic peasantry (and gentry?), avoided this hospitality because they were not "polite" enough. It is probably this indifference, if not disdain, on the part of the Anglo-Irish which had resulted in their isolation, their loneliness. In a later article she would emphasise this loneliness from the very outset, that is, from the very moment of building the house; but this loneliness also had to do with the mind of the builder, as she cryptically observes: "Henry III, in choosing this site, was not aiming at loneliness for its own sake […] his mansion islanded itself in a wide sea of country. He was neighbour to none."[17] Bowen concludes her essay on an

[15] Bowen, "The Big House", p. 28.
[16] Ibid., pp. 27-29.
[17] Bowen, "Bowen's Court", p. 142; first published in the USA in *Holiday* (December1958), pp. 86-87, 190-193.

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ambiguous note, mentioning a "barrier" between the traditional mode of life and the new values in the changed historical circumstances embraced by the younger generation of the Anglo-Irish, a barrier that is being broken down, but which she feels must exist to demarcate the old from the new. In other words, there is not only the rift between the native Irish and the Anglo-Irish big-house gentry who adopted finer European manners, and chose to live a life of their own, oblivious of, or nonchalant towards, the larger populace, but in post-Treaty Ireland, a new pattern of rift within Anglo-Irish families had set in. Is Bowen pointing to new bourgeois values vis-à-vis the traditional, landed gentry values of the Anglo-Irish landed gentry?

Towards the end of *Bowen's Court*, we find this conflict of values and attitudes which leads to fatal consequences in her own family. It was the conflict over the choice of profession between her father, "Henry VI", and her grandfather, Robert Cole Bowen. While Robert had been a devoted landowner and had managed his estate with utmost efficiency and wanted his heir to take up his position, Henry was of an independent mind and decided to go into the legal profession. The Ascendancy families lived a well-knit family-life in which tradition-bound practices mattered most, as Bowen notes at the beginning of *Bowen's Court*: "Lives in these houses, for generations, have been lived at high pitch […] in psychological closeness to one another and under the strong rule of the family myth". (*BC*:19) Henry's choice was a violation of the family mythologem, as it were. Bowen, however, in the manner of a true Protestant, and probably only once in her entire oeuvre, invokes the Calvinistic doctrine of the conflict between free will and predestination, supporting her father's undaunting choice as a display of free will rather than submit to any form of predestined profession. In a different way, it was a conflict between the values of the landed gentry, if not of the aristocracy, and those of an emerging bourgeoisie.

Nearly two decades later Bowen, in a different context, would align herself with the bourgeois values which she too probably had come to embrace. In an interview in 1968, commenting on the nature of contemporary Irish writing, Bowen would remark: "Irish novels. They are all about tormented lads or decaying old families. I wish Ireland had a more solid bourgeois kind of literature."[18] In *Bowen's Court*, however, she movingly records the nature of the family's affinity with Protestantism which, more than a faith, was an article of their political and social identity, difference, and supremacy. "Eliza Galwey brought religion into

[18] Bowen, "Portrait of a Woman Reading", p. 239.

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the family […] a sort of flooding […] The isolation of Bowen's Court, the rigid living, the emotional tie to nature all added depth to their continuous religious experience […] They were conquering Protestants […] before they were Christians" (*BC*: 247). The conflict between the father and the son was not merely a matter of family tradition; it had to do with maintaining the conqueror's position.

III

Bowen's Court, by all means an autobiographical work, is, nevertheless, a different kind of autobiography. Philippe Lejeune, one of the most eminent scholars on the genre of autobiography, defined it as "[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality."[19] Lejeune's formal definition was preceded by a more intimate one, by James Olney, for whom an autobiography is consonant with the making of the self, "a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the self." Olney proceeds to add that "If autobiography is in one sense history, then one can turn that around and say that history is also autobiography."[20] As an autobiography, *Bowen's Court* would seem to be closer to Olney's reflection on the interchangeability of history and autobiography. By history, Olney means the personal history of the autobiographer. *Pace* Olney, in Ireland narratives of the self are not restricted to the autobiographers' personal lives but transcend to become narratives of the nation. As Declan Kiberd has pertinently noted, "the autobiography in Ireland becomes the autobiography of Ireland."[21]

Bowen's Court, though a detailed account of the Bowen family against which we have to construct the life of the writer, is a confirmation of Kiberd's view as the history of the Bowen family becomes a microcosmic history of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. There are other pieces by Bowen such as *Seven Winters* which is a more intimate (and should we say, more definitive) account of her Dublin childhood, or the fragmentary or incomplete but more impressionistic *Pictures and Conversations*, published posthumously by her literary executor in 1975.[22] In an "afterthought" on autobiography, Bowen observes that "self-expression" ought to be more "detached and less impassioned", so much so that "in places he [the

[19] Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Contract", p. 193.
[20] James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*, pp. 35-36.
[21] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation* , p. 119.
[22] Bowen, *Pictures and Conversations* hereinafter cited in the main text as *PC.*

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autobiographer] shows his tie with himself only by an omniscience as to his own affairs which would be impossible for an outside person. He attempts to place not only his background but also the scenes, faces, and events which are the constituents of his story." From this observation it appears that she wants the autobiography to be more a narrative of the world in which the autobiographer grows up with his or her intimate self suppressed under the veneer of the external world described. But that is not really what she wants, for she proceeds to add that "[t]he quasi-outward view must alternate with a fearlessly inward one."[23] There is not much of her own inwardness in *Bowen's Court*, and in the process it becomes what Taura Napier calls a deflected autobiography, meaning that the narrator, instead of narrating her own story, substitutes it with the story of her family, while she herself fills out the spaces left uncovered by the family narrative. Such is the characteristic of the autobiographies of many Irish women writers such as Lady Gregory and Katharine Tynan.[24]

To ask why Bowen felt the need to write her family history at that critical juncture of Irish history, would, therefore, not be absolutely impertinent. Was it a deflected attempt to establish her own Irish identity? As noted above, in view of their decline and marginalisation in an embattled situation, the Anglo-Irish needed to assert their national belongingness and throw in their lot with Ireland. And much of this assertion, Seamus Deane argues, is worked through a myth shaped and established by Yeats — the myth of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy as "aristocratic" and bearer of "culture" vis-à-vis the Catholic middle-classes, whom he dismissed as philistine. This, for Deane, was a "distortion" of history, for the Ascendancy, since the eighteenth century, were looked upon as essentially bourgeois by the native Irish, and "as people of no blood, without lineage." In attributing an "aristocratic element" to the Ascendancy and by associating this with the spirituality of the Catholic peasantry, Yeats "distorted history in the service of myth". Yeats' cultural politics, for he transposed this myth into his poetry, was continued in Irish fiction of the Big House, rather anachronistically.[25] Deane's list of such anachronistic novels includes Bowen's *The Last September.*

But Bowen's case may be treated as something different, for there are different kinds of claims and counter-claims about her career as a writer and her Irishness; it was a problem inherent in her own situation of

[23] Bowen, *Seven Winters & Afterthoughts: Pieces on Writing*, p. 62.
[24] Taura S Napier, "Pilgrimage to the Self: Autobiographies of Twentieth-Century Irish Women", p. 70.
[25] Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980*, pp. 31-32.

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living across a fragile border, as of her own class living, as she herself described in an image of phantasmagoria, like "semi-strangers, for whom existence has something of a trance-like quality of a spectacle" (*PC*: 23). As she had been "transplanted" early on to England because of her father's illness, she was, she felt, "cleft between my heredity and my environment", though her initial inspiration to become a novelist came from England: "Possibly, it was England made me a novelist", she declares (*PC*: 23). At the same time she claimed to be a child of history; history "inebriated" her, though she also knew that history was not "romantic". In this respect, she can be said to have been writing against the grain of her European contemporaries like André Gide or Albert Camus and other modern writers who, in Hayden White's elegant phrase, had staged a "revolt" against the "burden of history", as it were.[26] Even in Ireland, Joyce spoke of the "nightmare" of history, though Synge and Yeats, and many others, sought to remain deeply rooted in Irish history. As an Irish writer, Ireland's troubled history naturally formed her raw material which acquired its representative form in her works of powerful fiction. History thus became fiction. It is this that results in a kind of "ambiguity" in her characters. In other words, it may not be too inappropriate to think that she lived her life on two levels — one, at the level of "raw" history, and another at the level of fiction, which she elsewhere calls "super-reality" (*PC*: 36). This was necessitated by her dual experience of being both Irish and English, both in terms of her inheritance and her family situation which she caught in the concluding passage to the "Origins" section in *Pictures and Conversations*: "What had to be bitten on was that two entities so opposed, so irreconcilable in climate, character and intention, as Folkestone[27] and Dublin should exist simultaneously, and be operative, in the same life-time, particularly my own" (*PC*: 33).

The divided lives in Kent and Dublin pertain to her childhood, but they had become the part and parcel of her entire experience. In fact, it would not be too much of an extension to present Bowen also as an exemplary case of that duality of the Irish mind which the philosopher Richard Kearney speaks of. Kearney argues that the nationality of the British-Irish archipelago cannot be "pure", and is, at best, "hybridized", since all nations are "imagined communities" and that "[t]here is no such thing as primordial nationality." In a similar vein he posits that "the Irish mind may seem to favour a more dialectical logic of both/and."[28] This

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[26] Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, pp. 39-41.

[27] Folkestone is in Kent, England. It is here that Bowen went to school at "Lindum" when her father was being treated in a hospital in Ireland.

[28] Richard Kearney, *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays 1976-2006*, pp. 16-19.

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would justify not only the political and intellectual position of Bowen, but also of all Anglo-Irish writers. Nonetheless, as a writer, Bowen always felt to be rooted in Ireland, as she testifies in a confessional mode in an interview to *The Bell* in 1942: "I regard myself as an Irish novelist […] As long as I can remember, I have been extremely conscious of being Irish — even when I was writing about such un-Irish things […] All my life I have been going backwards and forwards between Ireland and England and the Continent, but that has never robbed me of the strong feeling of my nationality."[29]

It would not, therefore, be impertinent to think that Bowen in *Bowen's Court* was reclaiming this mythic identity, particularly in view of her long absence from her County Cork home and her life in England because of her father's illness, and particularly, because she did not have that "localized tribalism so characteristic of the Coole Park circle".[30] Bowen started writing *Bowen's Court* during the Second World War when her home was Oxford. It has been remarked that she had volunteered to work for the British Ministry of Information, keeping England informed about Ireland's attitude towards Germany, since Ireland had chosen to remain neutral in the War. But her role was open even in Irish official circles, thus making this accusation somewhat eerie. It would rather seem stranger that she should write the autobiography of her own family while on a mission as serious as this.

It is believed that she had sent about two hundred reports back to England, but only a few have survived. And as her recent biographer has put it, there is nothing very sensitive about the surviving reports.[31] On the other hand, it could be presumed that her sojourn was a pretext to get deeper into Ireland's mind, and also re-establish, textually and imaginatively, the link in her personal life that had undergone sporadic disruptions, even if it had not been severed. But there is another episode in her life, never taken into account, which may be lying at the back of her activities in Ireland around that time. In 1937, Humphry House, her lover for some time, had taken up a position in Calcutta as a Professor of English at the prestigious Presidency College. In Calcutta, House had befriended contemporary intellectuals in the city whose gatherings he attended; those were also the days of anti-colonial turmoil, and spies were let loose all

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[29] "Meet Elizabeth Bowen", *The Bell* (September 1942), p. 425.

[30] W J McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett: Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History*, p. 401. McCormack is referring to Coole Park, the home of Lady Gregory which became a meeting-point for her côterie, including W B Yeats.

[31] On this point see Patricia Laurence, *Elizabeth Bowen: A Literary Life*, pp. 181-190.

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over to inform about anti-government activities. House himself, being a socialist and anti-colonial in sympathy, took a stroll in the city, spying its different activities. "Spyarchy" was the term he invented to describe what he was doing in as much as to satirise the culture of espionage he found around in Calcutta. In 1937, he had published a pamphlet entitled "I Spy with My Little Eye" and had it sent to his friend William Plomer through Elizabeth Bowen. Isaiah Berlin, who read the pamphlet, wrote to Stephen Spender that the pamphlet was "anti-England in India", though Berlin was more concerned with House's own intellectual decline.[32] It would be common sense to believe that Bowen must have read House's pamphlet (and must have had a good smile at it), and if House was not thought to have betrayed England in "spyarchy", then why should Bowen be thought to be anti-Irish at a sensitive time? Bowen's presence in Ireland in 1942 thus, can be looked upon, at best, as a kind of dilettantism.

We might be inclined to ask if Bowen was inhabiting a liminal space at that point of time. Or was she, in writing *Bowen's Court*, "welding together an inner landscape"? As a writer, she felt the need to have at her "command" "a recognizable world, geographically consistent". This does not mean that she needed a topographical space in which to locate her origin or her root; it has more to do with a landscape that is transformed by the imagination into a permanent mindscape, as Simon Schama observes how "landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock".[33] The search for permanence was inevitably built into the destiny of the Anglo-Irish, and in post-Independence Ireland, this quest for permanence for a people whose stability had been questioned and shaken up, would be natural. As she reflected in the "Places" section in *Pictures and Conversations*: "Permanence […] stands out the more strongly in an otherwise ephemeral world. Permanence is an attribute of recalled places" (*PC*: 44).

For Bowen, the "rock" that Schama mentions was visibly present before her eyes; but she had to create a comprehensive portrait of her family from the palimpsest of historical records and memory. And like any portrait, there is in it the enchantment of a dream-like quality, as she memorably notes in the "Afterword" to the 1960 edition of *Bowen's Court*:

> What runs on most through a family living in one place is a continuous, semi-physical dream. Above this dream level successive lives show their tips, their little conscious formations of will and thought. With the end of

[32] Isaiah Berlin to Stephen Spender, 5 January 1938, in Isaiah Berlin, *Flourishing: The Letters 1928-1946*, cited in Humphry House, *I Spy with My Little Eye*, p. 15.
[33] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 7.

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> each generation, the lives that submerged here were absorbed again […] We had no ghosts in that house — because they already permeated them. Their extinct forms were present in lights and forms. The land outside Bowen's Court windows left prints on my ancestors' eyes […] perhaps their eyes left, also, prints on the scene? (*BC:* 451)

IV

A reading of *Bowen's Court*, however, bears out the impression that Bowen, while writing an intimate history of her own family over ten generations, based on letters, law suit papers, journals and other documents — "retrieved facts" (*BC*: 452) — could also take a dispassionate view of its inhabitants as much as of the main events of Irish history against which the family chronicle unfolds. The process is thus of "interleaving the family story with passages from the history of Ireland" (*BC*: 452). In the course of narrating her family story, Bowen also offers glimpses into characteristic practices of the Anglo-Irish. As such, the family story also enables us to have an extended view of the attitudes of her class as much as some glimpses into its inner life: "For my part, it has been necessary for me to embed my family story in at least some account of the growth of the 'Protestant nation', and of the events that marked stages or declines in this growth" (*BC*: 453).

The texture of the narrative is created out of two principal threads as it stands, but it is the history of Ireland presented through the Anglo-Irish lens that seems to predominate. Significantly, Bowen handles her writing of history skilfully for, as she acknowledges elsewhere, "Raw history […] only chronicles the survivors". It is the story of the "favoured few", of those who triumph. In all naiveté, this observation would require her to write a history from the point of view of the native Irish, a history from below, if not a subalternist history. But "triumph" here allegedly carries a different connotation. Her history is the history of a once-dominant, ruling class, dislodged from power, but who have a final reckoning in their moral triumph from that dislocated position. At the same time, it is not that she is unable to encounter that past; but like any "romantic" writer, she is also inevitably blown away by the compulsion of her art, to "intensify", to "illuminate", to "transmute" her subject, a writer who has not "cared for things as they are".[34] So, the past remains mystified, veiled in illusion, and what ultimately exists is the "idea of the past" sublimated from its rawness by the power of imagination. *Bowen's Court* thus treads a fine dividing line between the broad contours of Irish

[34] Bowen, "The Bend Back", pp. 57-58.

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history and the chronicle of the Bowen family, crossing over to history to "illustrate" how the Bowens have been the children of history.

Bowen's Court opens with a graphic picture of the country marked by "an inherent emptiness of its own" (*BC*: 5). It is into this emptiness that the Bowens had arrived. They were actually landowning Welsh gentry, ap Owens, who became Bowen in the sixteenth century. The earliest of the Bowens was a Henry, "Henry I", haughty and arrogant, who had abandoned the King's party and had arrived in Ireland as part of the Cromwellian army. The Bowen character is established early on in "Henry I" of whom Bowen says that "[h]e was one of those men of whom it is hard to say whether their ideas breed their passions or their passions breed their ideas. Such men live in a heat or ferment of inner anger" (*BC*: 39). Family lore has it that Henry carried a hawk which was disliked by Cromwell, but in his hauteur Henry would not abandon it. Cromwell ultimately made up with him and proposed to give him as much land as his hawk could fly. Lore aside, the story demonstrates that the Bowens lived by passion, and this "haughty subjectivity" was handed down into the family as late as Robert Bowen and "Henry VI", the writer's father, as already noted above.

The Anglo-Irish had been imposed on the Irish as a colonising clan; the Bowens, like the other Anglo-Irish families, "got their position and drew their power from a situation that shows an inherent wrong" (*BC*: 453). This wrongly acquired position was also the root cause of their isolation. They lived a Defoesque life, as if they were on an "island":

> Each of these houses, with its intense centripetal life, is isolated by something very much more lasting than the physical fact of space: the isolation is innate; it is an affair of origin. It is possible that the Anglo-Irish people, like only children, do not know how much they miss. Their existences, like those of only children, are singular, independent and secretive (*BC*: 19-20).

It would be of interest here to note how Bowen reverses the conventional colonial trope of ascribing imbecility to the colonised. In fact, the native Irish were described in such terms by the English. What then sustained these families through successive generations in the midst of an alien people was their "psychological closeness to one another" and the "strong rule of the family myth" (*BC* : 19). *Bowen's Court* is underlined by an effort to construct that myth of her own family.

While Bowen outlines the predicament of the Anglo-Irish, she also implies that they were never able to make themselves at home with the natives. The fundamental ambivalence of the Anglo-Irish, as we shall

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see later, is brought out more sharply. Like their brethren in the English colonies in Asia and Africa, the Anglo-Irish maintained distance and avoided intimacy with the natives whom they had dispossessed. Bowen is sensitive to this great historical misery: “The structure of the great Anglo-Irish society was raised over a country in martyrdom. To enjoy prosperity one had to exclude feeling, or keep it within the prescribed bounds” (*BC:* 248).

In fact, most scholars have been so haunted by the preoccupation of exploring Bowen’s Irishness, that their focus has mostly remained fixed on discerning how she has constructed her Anglo-Irish world in exclusion of the native Irish in *Bowen’s Court* and other related autobiographical works. But *Bowen’s Court*, in particular, often offers glimpses into the searing poverty and the nature of subjection of the native Irish. While she debunks the unfeeling attitude of the Anglo-Irish she does not romanticise the natives but records their impoverishment and deprivation: “The Protestant newcomers’ liveliness, and well-being”, she comments, “was wholly at the native Catholic expense” (*BC*: 129). By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Anglo-Irish position had become so overwhelmingly dominant that “they *were* the people, and others fell in with them.” The Catholic gentry was co-opted by “class-interest”, and had no power to dissent: “Many Catholic gentry conformed — and who dare criticize them?” she observes. But then follows probably the most moving words denoting the humiliating life of the native poor: “As for the poor, they had to flatter to live — and, even so, most of them *barely lived at all*” (*BC*: 131; emphasis added). Despite the fact that the Anglo-Irish were settlers, and adopted Ireland for their homeland, the nature of exploitation of the native Irish is analogous to the modes of exploitation perpetrated on the natives in Asian and African colonies by English colonisers. Indeed, her own family was not an exception in this brutal exploitation of the native people. For instance, while “Henry III” “had been the countryside’s man”, his son “Henry IV” kept himself aloof. “And if loot were the object, one can well understand — rumours of those big showy Bowen Court’s parties must have made the house sound like a sort of Aladdin’s cave” (*BC*: 216).

We have already seen the ambivalent nature of the Anglo-Irish origin, and particularly, the ambivalent origin of the Bowens. As Welsh landowners, they were not even pure English: “They had been hybrids on from their start in Ireland; they were not even pure Anglo-Irish” (*BC*: 277). In Wales, the Bowens had resisted the Norman or Fleming colonisation. But in Ireland, this position was reversed. Bowen adopts a strange jugglery of ideas to justify this: “Wales seems to exclude the stranger; Ireland seduces him.” Is the charm of seduction a pretext for exploitation and

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dispossession of the Irish? One wonders. Once threatened by colonisation, Colonel Bowen was now to play a reverse role. The chilling, cryptic assertion seems to be infused with the power of a (wrong) justification: "His Gower had fretted under colonization. In Ireland he was to colonize"[35] (*BC*: 38).

Captain Bowen's idea of colonialism emanated from those of Cromwell whose own positions in Ireland and England were contradictory. But in explaining this situation, Bowen herself presents the native Irish as emotional and incapable of political independence — images of colonial stereotypes: "[T]he Irish extravagant looseness of feeling must have been deeply antipathetic to him. Equally, the cause to which he had dedicated himself in England would have been incomprehensible to the Irish mind. In England, he had fought for the English conception of 'freedom'; in Ireland, he fought against the Irish conception of it. The two ideas were not to be reconciled" (*BC*: 62). Such stereotypes of the Irish were to continue till the late nineteenth century. The paradox is that while the Anglo-Irish like the Bowens built their houses "in Roman urbane strongness" on "seized land" by "negation of mystical Ireland" (*BC*: 31), they made no attempts to negate this stereotypical image of the Irish in the spheres of economy and polity.

The cultural outcome of Anglo-Irish colonialism also had a disastrous effect. The native Gaelic culture and language had been erased or overlaid with the English language and English culture, and survived only on the periphery. "Meanwhile the Gaelic culture ran underground, with its ceaseless poetry of lament. (Gaelic was spoken in the kitchens and fields and in untouched country the setters did not know.)" The lament was not merely for the loss of traditional life but also for the loss of their own lands. The Anglo-Irish came to realise this much later, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when they themselves were being gradually dispossessed. Bowen's observation here is stark: "[O]nly dispossessed people know their land in the dark" (*BC*: 132). The Anglo-Irish thus came to share the similar fate of those at whose expense they had obtained their prosperity. The elegy of this dispossession is sung in the literature of the Irish Revival, spearheaded by Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge and others who

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[35] As Bowen explains earlier: "Gowersland, Gower or Gower Peninsula is the western extremity of Glamorganshire [Wales]. Like Ireland it is notable for its ruins, and like Ireland made complex by an imposed race […] In the reign of Henry I [King of England] this virtual island Gower was forcibly colonized by some Flemings, or Normans who […] assumed the privileges of a conquering race". The original inhabitants of Gowersland were Welsh (*BC*: 36). The Bowens were an indigenous Welsh Gower family.

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reinvented a Celtic spiritual past as still existent in the folk culture of the Irish peasantry, and identified this with their self-invented intellectual tradition of which they were self-appointed leaders. The Irish Revival was an attempt to assume cultural power when the economic power vested in landed proprietorship was on the decline.

As such, they being aliens, it took the Bowens three generations to get a firm foothold in Ireland. Bowen describes "Henry III" as "the first fully Irish Bowen" (*BC*: 157), at least "Irish in being, if not in interest", but imbued with the "Cromwellian justification" (*BC*: 129) and draws him in eloquent terms. It was this Henry who had built Bowen's court in 1776 "[i]mposed on seized land, built on rulers' ruling tradition, the house is [...] of the local rock" (*BC*: 31). Henry "loved the grand" and preferred "his innate stylishness" (*BC*: 124), but he could not be compared to a Renaissance prince for he had neither the education nor the culture that characterised many of the princes of Renaissance Europe. Rather, he was self-absorbed, "abstract and contemplative" (*BC*: 175), "narcissistic" and "anti-Elizabethan" who would not share his ideas nor pine for "personal intercourse" (*BC*: 175) without any interest in the individual.

Henry wanted to be a "liberal landowner", but Bowen cites no evidence that he took any interest in the well-being of his tenants. And here lies the tragedy of the Anglo-Irish. Though by the middle of the eighteenth century the "grafting-on [...] had been complete", it was, as the image shows, a case of artificial and external implantation, not a naturalisation which never took place. Bowen is sensitive to the alien nature of the Anglo-Irish as she observes. "They had come to share with the people round them sentiments, memories, interests, affinities. If Ireland did not accept them, they did not know it — and it is in that unawareness of final rejection, unawareness of being looked out at from some secretive opposed life, that the Anglo-Irish naïve dignity, and even, tragedy seems to me to stand. Themselves they felt Irish, and acted as Irishmen" (*BC*: 160).

Bowen here is writing what the famous historian Theodore Zeldin has named "intimate history", a history that "will not lie still", a past "which is alive in people's minds today".[36] In the passage quoted, Bowen brings out the real paradox of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. If they had at all shared in the cultural and affective life of the native Irish, it was, at best, perfunctory, for they had dispossessed them; at the same time, they were of a different religion, and absolutely alien having arrived "from a different land" (*BC*:126). Bowen comments that: "The greater part of them

[36] Theodore Zeldin, *An Intimate History of Humanity*, p. viii.

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[tenants] being Catholics, and he in most cases being a Protestant they are kept from him by the barrier of a different faith" (*BC*: 126). This sectarian division is the reason why the Protestant landlord did not follow the principles of "moral economy"; instead he "improves his property" (*BC*: 126). This makes explicit that the Anglo-Irish made no attempts to ameliorate the misery of the natives which had given rise to a number of rural disturbances, of which Bowen names only the Whiteboys.[37]

"Henry III", Bowen declares, had endeared himself to the people, but "Henry IV" was a different kind of a man, disliked because he was much more "Englishified", and it was during his time that the house was raided for arms during the '98 insurrection, though it was an abortive attempt. On the other hand, the Bowens were not very active in public life; throughout the entire narrative, we find no mention of any Bowen aspiring to or holding any public office. So, at the time of the Union, while other Anglo-Irish families were being bought off with privileges, the Bowens remained completely out of this orbit. Comments Bowen: "Crumbs from the English august table were only too eagerly snapped up. I should like to say that the Bowens refused such crumbs [… though] they were not […] worth buying" (*BC*: 209). We might locate here a strange self-abasement that is also, simultaneously, an assertion of self-dignity.

Therefore, it appears a little naïve on Bowen's part to think that the final rejection of the Anglo-Irish was the result of an animus that had remained hidden for long, and only found expression in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. *Bowen's Court*, both in its intimate account of the Bowen family and in the broad contours of Irish history against which the family narrative is written, foregrounds that the Anglo-Irish, like other colonisers, were exercising "dominance without hegemony". In other words, they had not been rooted enough to persuade the natives to legitimate their rule. It may be argued that the Anglo-Irish position in Ireland cannot be equated with the nature of English rule in the other, particularly Asian and African, colonies. For one thing, the Anglo-Irish had formed a part of the colonial apparatus, while the native Irish had been recruited into the English armies and the lower rungs of bureaucracy. But the nature of Anglo-Irish dominance over the native Irish merits

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[37] The "Whiteboy" movement was among the several rural protests that plagued eighteenth-century Ireland. The Whiteboys organised attacks on deer-parks and orchards in protest against doubled or trebled rents of the 1760s. The movement expressed resentment against exorbitant tithes exacted by Catholic priests and also against the potato tithe. Other such rural protests of the times were the Steelboy agitation and the Hougher movement. For a brief discussion on this see R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* , pp. 220-225.

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comparison with English colonial rule in the third-world colonies. It was only when the Anglo-Irish position was challenged that they came to realise their own precariousness. The threat of losing their own home made them reflect solemnly on their history, and to reclaim Irish history for themselves. Nonetheless, the undertone of self-criticism and self-mockery that characterises many Anglo-Irish accounts of justification of their Irishness can be viewed as a mode of implicit atonement.

For Bowen, the threat of losing her home is explicitly the occasion for writing *Bowen's Court*. To her, the home is "an origin of strength"; it is home that gives one "location" and "Identity", she points out, "would be nothing without its frame".[38] The recall of a home with a layered memory of several generations is for her a reality very unlike other expatriate writers like the Indian Salman Rushdie, whose "physical alienation" from his native land, compels him to "create fictions […] imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind".[39] Bowen's position being different, she could fall back on a real home, but this reality often acquires for her the nature of fiction coloured by the broken seams of history.

We have already seen the nature of her divided position, a hyphenated position, not only in terms of her origin and family history, but reinforced in later life, through her marriage and settlement in England. Therefore, her desire to be relocated in her ancestral home in Ireland and thus proclaim an Irish identity without any streak of ambivalence is actually redolent of that nostalgia for returning home, as explained by Milan Kundera in the passage quoted in the beginning. Bowen's family narrative, as we have noted, is intertwined with her own history as much as the facts of Irish history. But more than giving a historical account of family, Irish history and her own self, she seems here to be "brood[ing] on those scenes of memory" which have been torn away by the expediencies of history wreaking a personal injury, so much so that "remembrance" is "safe[r]" than a real return, as she remarks in the "The Cult of Nostalgia".[40]

As a last word, it may be added that though many Anglo-Irish families were dispossessed, Bowen's Court stood safe. In a way, Bowen's Court presented to Elizabeth Bowen the possibilities of a safer haven away from the devastations of the Second World War. But to a mind besieged by the horrors of the war, that prospect of a "picture of peace" that her ancestral home presented, also appeared delusive. Nonetheless, she bore the picture of Bowen's Court as something to be cherished; incidentally,

[38] Bowen, "The Idea of the Home", p. 163.
[39] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 10.
[40] Bowen, "The Cult of Nostalgia", p. 99.

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Bowen's Court finally passes from reality into an image. Bowen sold the house in 1959, and it was soon pulled down by its new owner. What remained is its image in the writer's mind, transcending the contingencies of time.

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"We can't leave the coffin": Irish Isolation and the Limits of Language in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*

Harriet Induni

Speech is a restricted occupation in *Cré na Cille*. Written in Irish and published in 1949, Máirtín Ó Cadhain's novel (translated into English as *Graveyard Clay*)[1] is set during the Second World War, in the cemetery of a village in the Connemara Gaeltacht, an Irish-speaking region in the west of Ireland. The narrative, which takes place entirely below ground, purports to record the voices of the dead, who use their time to gossip, bicker, and respond to news of the living world (which comes only through the arrival of fresh corpses). Although comic in its way, the novel presents an unsentimental illustration of the Irish peasantry's consciousness, with which Ó Cadhain was on intimate terms.[2] He portrays their lives and deaths as profoundly limited – deprived of opportunity by financial hardship and continued emigration, and holding conservative views which prevent cross-cultural reciprocity.

Their experiences are also shaped – and potentially confined – by the Irish language, spoken natively by most characters. The following essay examines Ó Cadhain's presentation of Irish as the site of both limitation and connectivity. I illustrate this tension through close analysis of one of *Cré na Cille*'s numerous dead voices: a member of the French air force killed in combat, crash-landing into Galway Bay. Now buried in neutral ground, he endeavours to learn Irish, seeking not only to understand his new associates, but also to convey information about the

[1] Two complete translations of *Cré na Cille* have been published: *Graveyard Clay*, translated by Liam Mac Con Iomaire and Tim Robinson (2016) and *The Dirty Dust*, translated by Alan Titley (2015). Unless otherwise indicated, quotations used in this chapter refer to Mac Con Iomaire and Robinson's translation.

[2] Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh, "A Vision to Realise: Ó Cadhain's Politics".

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fight against Nazism. The airman's attempt to overcome the language barrier, and the frequent inability – or refusal – of adjacent corpses to comprehend this message, offers a means to reflect upon the boundaries affecting both the Gaeltacht and the Irish nation as a whole. I consider firstly the Frenchman's attempt to share support for the Allied cause: how his command of Irish increases but fails to affect the localised perspectives of the villagers. Their lack of engagement can be understood as an involuntary result of destitution; but it also creates a wider critique of Ireland's neutrality during the Emergency (the name given to World War II within neutral Ireland). Following this discussion, I turn to instances in which the Frenchman's voice creates comic and even lively linguistic interactions, and explore how far these scenes resist prescriptive isolationism in Irish culture.

After being buried with a "fine funeral" (p. 37), the French airman speaks often and passionately regarding the conflict which ended his life. He calls upon the Irish men and women around him to engage intellectually with the Allies' fight. Other characters also discuss the war, including Tomás Inside, who is ever-concerned about the "patch of land" which will lose value if the English market collapses (p. 171). There is also a swastika-tattooed Nazi supporter, who calls out that "Hitler is my darling" (pp. 6, 19, 171) and hopes the dictator will make England "eat dead cats" (p. 47). The Frenchman is an exception in this *mélange*: he voices an outsider's perspective, in an outsider's language. Those around are initially dismissive, hearing "spluttering" and a "torrent of talk", from which they surmise only that he is "not at all grateful to Hitler" (p. 36). In voicing the Allied cause, the pilot's foreign speech is associated with an equally foreign political message.

However, in a gradually increasing mastery of Irish, the Frenchman undertakes an ongoing effort to overcome the boundary between his companions and knowledge of the Second World War. He counters Tomás Inside's obsession over the "patch of land" with a narrative which is far wider in scope:

> —*… Monsieur Churchill a dit qu'il retournerait pour libérer la France, la terre sacrée. Mon ami, the French Gaullistes and les Américains and les Anglais* will capture *la France.* That is *promis by Messieurs Churchill et Roosevelt …* That is a *prophétie … Prophétie …* Prophecy, *je crois en Irlandais …* (p. 181)[3]

[3] "After the escape from Dunkerque and the upheaval of June 1940, Mr Churchill said that he would return to liberate France, the sacred land … My friend, the French Gaullistes and the Americans and the English will capture France. That is

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In attempting to instil hope for this alliance in the minds of other corpses, the pilot mixes French with Irish, successfully translating the key terms “capture” and “prophecy”. His movement between vocabularies accentuates the uneasy connection between local and international perspectives which is at stake. The two languages do not integrate smoothly. For instance, while it is obscured in the English translation by the closeness of *prophétie* and *prophecy*, the sharp phonetic move from *prophétie* to the Irish *targaireacht* marks a division between Romance and Celtic languages.[4] Unresolved linguistic disjunctures emphasise the foreignness of the airman’s beliefs. They also highlight his determined efforts to carry both words and historical understanding across the language barrier.

It is not clear that Irish corpses apprehend any change in this boundary. There is little indication that his speech has been understood. Others confirm that he has said *prophecy* correctly, but respond only to this word, discounting its international context in favour of specifically Irish concerns. The first respondent, Dotie from East Galway, advises that “foretelling” (*tairgín*) is the preferable term used in her area; another voice begins a spirited argument about the mysterious prophecies of St. Columbcille. Partially overcoming the divide in languages only makes the Frenchman a participant in debates over their own local preoccupations. Clair Wills notes this failure in translation, writing that the “non-communication between the villagers and the Frenchman reveals a gulf between worlds. Both literally, and in terms of its sentiments […] the pilot’s language is incomprehensible to them, an alien European tongue”.[5] The airman is a vocal representative of the Allied cause, who nevertheless struggles to be understandable in a way that will redirect the attention of those around him towards alien concerns.

In the above passage, it is not clear whether Irish characters’ reversion to the local is precipitated by an involuntary lack of understanding, or a more deliberate shift away from the Frenchman’s global preoccupations. Is the language barrier denotative of an *inescapable* boundary between both parties – or is it instead symptomatic of a refusal to abandon insularity? Wills concludes firmly that there is no “wilful ignorance” on the villagers’ part: their incomprehension is actually “a reflection of their powerlessness”, frozen in the limbo of poverty-stricken rural Ireland.[6]

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promised by Messrs Churchill and Roosevelt…That is a *prophétie* … *prophétie* … Prophecy, I believe in Irish…”. Trans. by Charlotte Bentley.

[4] Máirtín Ó Cadhain, *Cré na Cille*, p. 213.

[5] Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A History of Ireland During the Second World War*, p. 342.

[6] Wills, p. 343.

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However, the developing patterns of language exchange across *Cré na Cille* suggest that the Frenchman's distance is, to an extent, maintained by his audience.

Ó Cadhain suggests a wilful boundary in the villagers' use of their own language to interrupt the Frenchman's theme. Late in the text, the pilot can be heard articulating a justification for fighting Nazism:

> —… *Mon ami*, the United Nations, England, *les États Unis, la Russe, et les Français Libres* are defending human rights against … *quel est le mot?* … Against the barbarism *des Boches nazifiés.* I've already told you about the concentration camps. Belsen …
> —Nell Pháidín is on Churchill's side. Fowlers and anglers from England, of course …
> —She was always treacherous, the little bitch! *Up Hitler! Up Hitler! Up Hitler!* Do you think if he comes over he'll raze her new house to the ground? (p. 247)[7]

This conversation deserves evaluating at length, for it is one of the few moments in which wider ideological understandings of the war's moral necessity receive open attention. The veteran again attempts to cross the boundary between Irish consciousness and the suffering taking place elsewhere. He does not quite command vocabulary on the topic, asking "*quel est le mot?*" to find a word which will express the Nazi concentration camps. Nevertheless, using Irish to describe the Holocaust and the moral "barbarism" of its perpetrators, he articulates specific historical knowledge in a language spoken by those around him. Rather than remaining behind a boundary, the pilot's own use of Irish has an arc over the course of *Cré na Cille*. Initially, when the Frenchman is heard as a "torrent of talk", the incomprehensibility of his language and his ideas are correspondent, and likely unavoidable. But a disparity develops – and it draws attention to a symbolic division between characters' ability to understand, and their failure to do so. His two respondents' comments are set in sharp contrast with the airman's international, morally invested perspective, and maintain a conceptual border around his words.

The Frenchman's gradually increasing lucidity when discussing the Emergency can be read in the light of Ireland's continued neutrality – a policy which persisted even as new information made the war's moral justification unambiguous. Under strict censorship laws, it is unlikely that

[7] "My friends, the United Nations, England, the United States, Russia, and the Free French Forces are defending human rights against ... what is the word? ... Against the barbarism of the Nazi krauts. I've told you already about the concentration camps. Belsen ...". Trans. by Charlotte Bentley.

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explicit information regarding the Holocaust could have reached Gaeltacht residents (or the rest of Ireland) during the war itself. The Frenchman’s speech instead plays a symbolic role within a national context. In Thomas Bartlett’s analysis, “by 1943 the morality of the war, unclear in 1939, had been firmly resolved in the Allies’ favour”. Through the final years, he concludes, Taoiseach (prime minister) Éamon de Valera sustained his isolationist stance through “wilful blindness” to “mounting and irrefutable evidence of the true nature of Nazi rule”.[8] In *Cré na Cille*, a postwar novel written with full knowledge of the Holocaust, Ó Cadhain uses the Frenchman’s voice to scrutinise this tension between insularity and the increasingly clear moral implications of the second world war. The airman’s struggle to provoke engagement, despite his marked success in overcoming the language barrier, questions how far Ireland’s ongoing division from those suffering elsewhere can be considered wilful.

Rather than engaging in dialogic interaction, Ó Cadhain’s characters actively obscure and redirect the Frenchman’s description of “the barbarism *des Boches nazifiés*” and its implications for neutrality. The next speaker brings the discussion back to a provincial level, describing how “Nell Pháidín is on Churchill’s side” because England provides a supply of “fowlers and anglers”. This reversion is emphasised by the next reply, from the text’s foremost character Caitríona, who interprets history very personally: long-standing hatred for her sister Nell necessitates an immediate alliance with Hitler. Just as de Valera did not alter Ireland’s neutral detachment, so the corpses deflect the Frenchman’s words in order to sustain the boundary between far-off bloodshed and their own local existences. Siobhán Kilfeather also argues that the Frenchman’s presence is to be read at a national level, writing that he is “a reminder that Ireland had made itself marginal to the fight against continental European fascism”.[9] With a close reading of this passage, it becomes evident that Ó Cadhain draws attention to Ireland’s self-marginalisation through the representation of language.

Both replies to the mention of the Nazi’s “barbarism” create an active separation from the subject, even while supposedly addressing it. Caitríona’s vocal support for the German forces involves a sudden switch out of Irish, shouting: “*Up Hitler! Up Hitler! Up Hitler!*”. Brief transitions into English are frequent throughout *Cré na Cille*; characterised by solecisms, they often embody a lively challenge to the division between the Gaeltacht and an English-speaking space. Yet these loans can also

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[8] Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History*, p. 463.
[9] Siobhán Kilfeather, “The Gothic Novel”, p. 93.

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suggest a (self-imposed) limit on the Irish language's cultural reach. Brian Ó Broin, discussing racism within the novel, notes a curious lexical substitution: although there are serviceable words for "black" and "Italian" in Irish, speakers use English terms instead. According to Ó Broin, this replacement suggests "that these two racial or cultural concepts are foreign enough to them that they are uneasy Gaelicising them".[6] The idea of expressing cultural estrangement by adopting an alternative lexicon is visible in relation to the second world war here. Caitríona's borrowing from English for her superficial praise of Hitler marks the subject as external, and fundamentally outside what can be expressed in the Irish language. While the Frenchman has learned enough Irish to speak plainly of the war's morals, Caitríona's transition to English exiles her own response. The move suggests that failure to comprehend the war is not only an unavoidable, passive condition; it is a maintained estrangement.

Further signs of a willed boundary are present in *Cré na Cille*'s formal representation of speech – specifically the punctuation which records transitions between voices. It reveals here that the Frenchman's neighbours, even while responding to his words, work to prevent the empathic engagement for which he strives. Ó Cadhain sets out how to navigate the text's proliferation of dashes and ellipses with a somewhat cryptic schema at the opening:

> Guide to Dialogue Conventions
>
> — Speech beginning
> —… Speech in progress
> … Speech omitted (p. xxxix)

In the Frenchman's speech above, his opening words (—… *Mon ami*) are revealed to come from a speech already "in progress". The second two speakers, meanwhile, have their contributions introduced with a dash: "—Nell Pháidín is on Churchill's side. […] —She was always treacherous". This indicates "speech beginning", which in fact means that they are *responding* to the previous corpse, joining a thread of conversation that already exists on the page. The connection might be ambiguous without Ó Cadhain's use of a dash, because although the observation that "—Nell Pháidín is on Churchill's side" relates to World War II, it does not actually engage with any of the international or moral terms in which the

[6] Brian Ó Broin, "Racism and Xenophobia in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*", p. 277.

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Frenchman just described the conflict. The tension between dialogue and disengagement that emerges from this discordant reply is made more complex still, for even though the use of a dash signals a firm connection between speakers, the Frenchman's preceding phrase is followed by an ellipsis: "I've already told you about the concentration camps. Belsen …", imposing a distance between both acts of speech. It does not indicate that the airman's voice is trailing off into nothing, unable to find more language, but rather a continuation of speech that has been removed. The pilot's words continue, but are no longer represented; instead, the text moves on to the next line, and the voice discussing Nell Pháidín's perspective on Churchill "begins".

Ó Cadhain's use of dashes and ellipses illustrates that communication in *Cré na Cille* is palimpsestic, with dialogue itself forcibly delimiting prior acts of speech. In this case, the French airman's ongoing speech regarding "Belsen ..." is lost through the intercessions of his neighbours, who intentionally impose a limit on the rest of his message regarding the Holocaust and its implications for engagement with the war. Readers are left with only an ellipsis to signify events outside Ireland's border.

Few utterances reach completeness in *Cré na Cille*, and much is cut off unsaid. Language throughout is characterised by a repeating pattern of expression and interruption, with words put out of hearing by the next interruption. Declan Kiberd has claimed that the novel is "punctuated not by genuine conversation but by collections of rival monologues, without interaction of any significant kind, as each speaker seeks to appease his or her monomania and reduces all interlocutors to silence".[10] Yet while this verdict captures the anarchic turmoil of discourse in *Cré na Cille*, it is a generalisation which prevents the recognition of instances when specific, historical tensions shape the boundaries of speech and its absence. Characters interrupt and constrain the contributions of others, but not always out of personal "monomania". Ó Cadhain's punctuation works not to illustrate a transcendental "death of language"[11] as a communicative device, but rather the directed use of language to curtail explications of uncomfortable history.

Cré na Cille underscores how the privations of 1940s Gaeltacht life drive characters' withdrawn, coffin-bound perspectives. This partly explains the refocusing from Nazism to the financial benefits of "fowlers and anglers from England", and Wills is correct to connect their apparently

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[10] Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, p. 582.
[11] Ibid.

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"small-minded" responses to poverty and a lack of social opportunity.[12] At a personal level, characters' understanding of global history is socially determined. And yet, their bounded discourse must also be interpreted at a national level. When the interventions of the pilot's neighbours force the enormity of the Holocaust to find signification only as an ellipsis, a non-verbal scar, the confinements of language take on wider symbolism. They signify an amoral complicity, created by post-independence Ireland's voluntary isolationism.

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The borders evident in these few (but crucial) passages regarding war show how language is a source of circumscription and moral tension in *Cré na Cille*. However, this is not necessarily true of all the Frenchman's remarks. His role as a linguistic and cultural outsider reveals borders in culture, but they are not all inviolable. Indeed, the pilot's effort to cross the language barrier is at times comic – especially during his initial experiments, when pronouncing Irish syllables proves difficult. He tries to recite phrases about animals, such as *tá an mada ag ól,* "the dog is drinking", but confuses *ag ól* with *ag gol*, and declares instead that "the dog is crying".[13] Other characters are exasperated with the lack of sense: "Crying! I never saw a dog crying […] Maybe the dog went on the drink and then he started to cry about the hangover he got".[14] But they also assist by offering imitations of the creatures in question. Comparing the Irish *Míámh!* with the French *Miauo!* allows him to learn the word *cat*.[15] A cat's mew is transliterated differently in each language, but it forms a point of contact which allows the learner to make progress. Kiberd writes that the text is concerned with "the death of language", so that "attempts to use language for purposes of communication are seldom made and even less often reciprocated".[16] Yet this is not the case in the productive verbal chaos here. Although the exchange does not obscure the serious problems regarding historical communication which the pilot also encounters, it nevertheless portrays the graveyard – and the boundaries of the Irish

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[12] Wills, pp. 342–43.
[13] Ó Cadhain, *Cré na Cille*, p. 163.
[14] Máirtín Ó Cadhain, *The Dirty Dust*, trans. by Alan Titley, p. 131. Mac Con Iomaire and Robinson translate this section less literally, replacing "crying" and "drinking" with "thinking" and "sinking" in order to illustrate the Frenchman's slight mistake in pronunciation (*Graveyard Clay*, p. 137).
[15] Ó Cadhain, *Cré na Cille*, p. 164.
[16] Kiberd, p. 582.

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language – as playful; the potential site of common ground.

The Frenchman’s lively integration into graveyard culture is in fact used to satirise confining interpretations of the Irish language. Ó Cadhain mocks the insistence that Irish constitutes a dead or dying language, and challenges the restrictive nostalgia associated with this mournful view. The pilot is admitted into the Rotary society, founded to promote cultural betterment (p. 202), and plans to compose a thesis on “canine dental consonants” in the lower-class area of the cemetery (p. 204). There are concerns, however:

> – The Institute thinks he has learned too much Irish – of the kind that has not been dead for the prescribed period – and as there’s a suspicion that a few of his words are ‘Revival Irish,’ he has to unlearn every syllable before he’s qualified to carry out the study properly. (p. 204)

The speaker sets out a ridiculous delineation of Irish culture, in which the only language acceptable to speak must be “dead” (no longer spoken)[17] for “a prescribed period”. Their vision of linguistic purity, privileging the obsolete and moribund as authentically Irish, is a pointed criticism of post-independence government policy. Bríona Nic Dhiarmada describes Ó Cadhain as a writer deeply frustrated by how the Gaeltacht and its culture, instead of regenerating under the Free State, became “a fossilised, idealised embodiment of what had been lost, imagined now through a haze of romantic nostalgia”.[18] The conservatism Nic Dhiarmada identifies was particularly acute in relation to the Irish language movement, which was co-opted by the state as a vehicle for isolationism and antimodernist stereotyping.[19] In the above quotation, the cadaver’s judgement evokes this climate. Their reference to an “Institute” and prescribed limits on language evokes a sense of officialdom, committed to preserving only what is already dead. The Institute also rejects “Revival Irish” (that learnt by non-native speakers in the wake of the Gaelic revival),[20] and so parodies the setting of a cultural border around the authentic Gaeltacht.

The airman implicitly ridicules these distinctions. Criticising his “Revival Irish” applies a binary distinction which makes little sense, given his status as an outsider not from Ireland’s English-speaking

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[17] David Crystal, *Language Death*, p. 11.

[18] Bríona Nic Dhiarmada, “Utopia, Anti-Utopia, Nostalgia and Ó Cadhain”, p. 54.

[19] Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland, “Language and Identity in Twentieth-Century Ireland”, p. 15.

[20] John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*, p. 303.

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Galltacht, but continental Europe. Regardless of the Institute's objections (and those of the graveyard's Hitler fanatic, whose voice surfaces as a brief reminder of unreconciled political divisions), he is admitted to the Rotary. The airman is judged an "enthusiastic Gael" (p. 204) even while expressing gratitude in his discordant mixture of French and Irish: "Go raibh maith agaibh, mes amis! Merci beaucoup. . .".[21] The restrictions upon the Irish language, put in place out of nostalgia for a culture which is pristine (at the expense of being dead), are in this instance not upheld.

The lively hybridisation of Irish with other tongues, introduced by the Frenchman's presence, plays an ambivalent role through *Cré na Cille*. In relation to the Second World War, lexical juxtaposition reveals a failure to weaken the boundaries between perspectives. This is not always the case. Eoin Byrne interprets the Frenchman's "fraught attempts" to master Irish as "a constant source of humour". Scenes such as the aviator's confused language lesson reveal "the dialogic nature of the work, in which various strains of dialogue are woven together" out of fragmentation.[22] This positive view of the mixing that Byrne terms "*Frangaeilge*"[23] is partly evident in the graveyard's Celtic Studies colloquium, in which the boundaries between multiple languages, not only French and Irish, are defied.

The proceedings, which start with a level of academic seriousness, soon descend into a raucous discussion of language and Irish literature. A corpse decides to tell a story relating to the mythic heroes Conn and Mogh-Nuadhat, who fought and divided Ireland between them. The legend is referred to frequently in early Irish writing. In *Cré na Cille*, however, it becomes a source of rude and disorderly wordplay. Mogh-Nuadhat is renamed Moghchat, playing on the English *mog* and the Irish and French *chat* (cat). The speaker's rendition of Conn and Mogh's battle is titled "The Kitten That Committed an Impropriety on the White Sheets of All of Conn's Half of Ireland", and it suggests that the name Dublin, which derives from the Irish "Black Pool" (Dubh Linn), actually refers to the kitten's "impropriety" (pp. 226–27). The combination of scatology and mistranslation continues as the Frenchman becomes involved. Evoking the Celtic connection between France and Ireland, he begins to speak Breton, declaring wrongly that the word *gast* (in Breton, a whore or bitch) means "a woman who has a stall of holy objects", and is linked to the Irish *gaiste*

[21] "Thank you all, my friends! Thank you very much", Ó Cadhain, *Cré na Cille*, p. 240.
[22] Eoin Byrne, "'Éistear le mo ghlór!': Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* and Postcolonial Modernisms", *Irish Studies Review*, 26.3 (2018), 335–46 (p. 340).
[23] Ibid.

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(a snare). A great deal of Ó Cadhain’s apocryphal interchange is itself almost untranslatable.[24] But the verbal misappropriations create a striking, animated sense of interconnection. To describe the amalgam of languages in Byrne’s terms, as dialogic fragments “woven together”, is not entirely satisfactory. There is hybridity here, based not so much on overcoming a language barrier as dispensing with the need for correct translation altogether. However, this does not create coherence. The same disjuncture heard within the Frenchman’s darker speech on war is never resolved into unboundedness.

Ó Cadhain’s graveyard is not a place without playfulness and connectivity, but neither is it a place of life. Although multiple cadavers are able to speak, their voices colliding dynamically, this heterogeneous linguistic environment rests in tension with a morbid tendency towards confinement and discontinuity. Ó Cadhain uses the aviator, an outsider struggling to integrate, to explore this uneasy borderland in the Emergency-era Gaeltacht. In relation to the Second World War, the Frenchman’s struggle to communicate his animosity towards Nazism and his hope for the Allies is at once linguistic and perspectival. While the villager’s inability to comprehend the war on anything other than a local level signifies their social deprivation, the uncrossed verbal threshold between their views and those of the airman is also reflective of de Valera’s Ireland, and the emergent implications of neutrality. In less politically fraught conversations, the chaotic encounters between Irish, French, Breton and English allow the Frenchman to offer a dialogic counter to the circumscription of Irish. Yet even this energetic disorder is limited; characters cannot “leave the coffin” of their language or their nation. While *Cré na Cille* suggests that the boundaries of speech can be unsettled, communication without division is not achieved within the novel’s confines.

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Way-Finding and the Poetics of Cartography in Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*

Manal S. Khan

Towards the end of her nonfiction work *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), under the last section titled "Maps", Dionne Brand offers the readers an unfamiliar method of way-finding, which she defines as an "oral ruttier". An oral ruttier[1] is a maritime navigational tool described as "a long poem containing navigational instructions which sailors learned by heart and recited from memory" (212). The ruttier, Brand continues, "contained the routes and tides, the stars and maybe the taste and flavour of the waters, the coolness, the saltiness; all for finding one's way at sea" (212). The poem is for travellers, and it includes not only navigational instructions, but also examples of what they can expect to find on their journey. Brand's maps are non-textual, offering a method for way-finding using sensual, environmental, instinctual, and experiential directions rather than boundary lines and roads designating inclusions and exclusions. These are the kinds of maps that Brand conceptualises in her novel *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (2000) as she follows the descendants of Marie Ursule as they struggle with dispossession and longing, searching for a sense of belonging and a place to call home.

The novel begins in 1824 Trinidad, when Marie Ursule, queen of a rebellious band of slaves known as the Sans Peur Regiment, orchestrates a mass suicide as the ultimate act of rebellion against their slaver owners. Her four-year old daughter Bola is the only survivor, a child whose life Marie Ursule could not bear to extinguish. Bola is smuggled away to live free in an abandoned monastery on the coastline, and she grows into a wild and free-spirited woman who has nine children with nine different men, none of whom had any proprietorial or matrimonial claim to her. *At the Full and Change of the Moon* then becomes her descendants' stories,

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[1] *Ruttier* is the French form of *routier*, and it is a set of instructions for finding a route or course, especially at sea.

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as they struggle to live with slavery's complex legacy of oppression, pain, and a yearning to belong.

Bola's children and their children are scattered across the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. Her descendants have lived through two world wars, racism, poverty, and violence into the twentieth century, which is when the bulk of the stories take place. They become the novel's stand-in for the lived experience of the real Black diaspora and their connection to the Door of No Return[2] that Brand contemplates in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, a sister companion to the novel. The maps in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* reflect the cartographies of "longing and muddled sight" (53) where Bola's father Kamena, an escaped slave, "had not made his way to Terre Bouillante so much as dreamed it and been so lost he'd found it" (26). Brand's maps are neither a visual representation of a defined area, nor do they try to represent the geographical arrangements, political boundaries, population, natural resources, or economic activities that were the imperative of colonial mapmakers. The maps created during colonial expansion are accepted as the traditional way cartography functions. Traditional maps stand for "geographies of domination" that Katherine McKittrick believes reinforces a "displacement of difference," wherein "particular kinds of bodies [are] configured by racism into a hierarchy of human and inhuman persons that . . . form the category of 'human being'".[3] For the Black diaspora, living in what Christina Sharpe refers to as "the wake of slavery",[4] this "displacement of difference" has "leaked" in from a past that was "spatialized, in ships and on plantations, in homes, communities, nations, islands, and regions" by "transatlantic slavery" (McKittrick xvii). By presenting "conflicting geographic patterns" of Black diaspora subjects against boundaries and borders defined by colonialism, conquest, and the transatlantic slave trade (McKittrick 104), *At the Full and Change of the Moon* demonstrates the pain these maps inflict on the Black diaspora. In short, the novel shows how traditional mapping practices made "a black claim to place . . . unavailable through traditional geographic means" (McKittrick 104).

Building on the ideas of alternate cartographies and conflicting geographies in the works of Brand and McKittrick, I will focus on how Eula and Maya, two of Marie Ursule's descendants from *At the Full and*

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[2] The Door of No Return is a museum and memorial to the Atlantic slave trade on Gorée Island, a location off the coast of Senegal. It opened in 1962 and is said to memorialise the final exit point of enslaved Africans from Africa.

[3] K McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, p. xv.

[4] C Sharpe, *In the Wake: on Blackness and Being*, p. 18.

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Change of the Moon, journey to new nations and map, plot, and navigate new geographical spaces and places by resisting, challenging, and redefining the ideologies of "belonging and unbelonging" (Brand 2001, 6) that are imposed on them as Black diaspora subjects. Their navigational tools – their "routes, tides, stars, taste, and flavor of the waters to find their way at sea" – are the racism, sexism, and poverty that they attempt to circumvent and overcome. McKittrick's concepts of "conflicting geographic patterns" and "the displacement of difference" from *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006) will help me focus my reading on the way Maya and Eula navigate their geographies as Black women in Amsterdam and Toronto respectively. Brand's approach to way-finding as an oral ruttier that she utilises in her prose-poem "Ruttier for the Marooned in the Diaspora" (213) which Christina Sharpe calls "a song of direction that contains mercy" (Sharpe, 133), will provide a mapping framework for tracing the ways Maya and Eula conceptualise "belonging and unbelonging" (Brand 2001, 6), and map their journeys to that end. By "way-finding" I mean routes, directions, and emotions that indicate their sense of place and belonging (or unbelonging) within definitions of national, familial, and social structures that have persisted since the era of the Middle Passage.[5] These two women end the novel ambivalently and, to an extent, unsuccessfully, attached to their place. Yet Brand insists that for those in the diaspora, despite their "temporariness" and "futile search for a homeland" (203), their "journey is the destination" (203), and her oral ruttier encourages a way to re-map connections and resistances that challenge traditional narratives of belonging and national borders.

Kamena's "unending and futile search for a homeland" recurs in Bola's children as they disperse and scatter across the New and Old Worlds. Brand writes in *A Map to the Door of No Return* that the diaspora "inhabit temporariness, elsewhere . . . and this is what they give to all cities" (203). The places and spaces that are traditionally considered safe and inclusive are, in *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, sites of exclusion and violence for the Black diaspora subjects. They also become sites of resistance, challenge, and rejection. Brand believes that Blacks in the diaspora carry the Door of No Return in their senses; the metaphorical Door is the site of creation of the "Blacks in the New World Diaspora" (5) that severed them from their origins in Africa and positioned them in a

[5] The middle passage is the triangular trade route in which Africans were forcibly transported as slaves from Africa to the New World as part of the Atlantic slave trade. The route involved round trips between Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean or America.

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space of "belonging and unbelonging" (6). Eula and Maya leave their homes in the Caribbean and escape to North America and Europe. They travel with "no destination in mind" (Brand 2001, 150) but they "desire destination" (McKittrick 104), which translates into a desire for belonging. For Maya, "belonging" means the freedom to "drift on the cream of life" (214) and forget the unhappiness in her family caused by poverty and economic exploitation. Eula desires a connection to her ancestry. They both try to escape poverty, patriarchal control, violence, and the legacy of slavery that "filled the house . . . and the island with heaviness" (217).

Maya and Eula land in places that appear to be the antithesis of their origins. Maya moves to a city in the Old World and takes a job as a prostitute in the windows of Amsterdam's red-light district. She navigates herself into a small, precise, contained, and transparent place that she is able to (momentarily) control and manipulate. Maya appropriates, redefines and even recontextualises the geography of the window space: without her pimp's permission, she domesticates the small space in the manner of housewives, "puttering", "fixing", "decorating", and "primping" curtains, table lamps, and furniture. She exaggerates the concept of the domestic scene by making it visible to a street known for sexual transactions and violent confrontation. The viewers and buyers that Maya sees in the novel are white and male, suggesting the patriarchal authority of the colonial project that was replicated within far-flung domestic spheres. In this context, Maya's "In a Window" chapter exposes the violence hidden in the domestic space that Maya and Eula grew up in: Maya's father was physically and emotionally abusive, while Eula was sexually molested by her brother when she was a child. Maya exercises her agency by leaving home, becoming financial independent, and finding a temporary place for herself in an "Old World" space that is away from New World Curaçao. She constructs various tableaux in which she regulates the relationship between her environment and herself.[6] "Belonging", for Maya, is not a physical space or place, but the freedom to be self-contained and have the option of choice: "What life she wanted she wasn't sure, but money was a part of it. Money would take her beyond the Biljmer and her brother. . . she only wanted to drift down streets or drift out into the country . . . She wanted to be nowhere on time . . ." (215). A traditional map of Amsterdam would not offer Maya the way to "drift" through nations. As a young, low-income Black woman from the Caribbean, she does not have a lot of options with which to let "streams of her appear and dissipate in air" (215).

[6] Connor Ryan: "Defying Diaspora in the Words of Women Writers", p. 1240.

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The window is also a space where she learns the cartography of her body. Cartography, as a "graphic container of geographical information",[7] allows one to orient oneself. For Maya, her orientation of space and place begins with mapping her body in the frame of the window, where "every area of space and air composed. She begins in the left corner. Her leg . . . her right leg, planed to her ankle . . ." (209). She examines her window and herself as extensions of one another; there is no external consciousness present in the space and place of the window:

> Her compositions occupied her more and more. Her discoveries of regions of the pane and the spectral relationship to the sun, their unrequited openness to the dead moon, these she attended with more curiosity than the job. And the phases and shapes of parts of her body. She liked her body's shine. (220)

Maya is "framed" in this "simple transparent place, a place to see and to be seen" (208), a Black person in a hyper-visible construct on display in Amsterdam. Brand recalls seeing Black women in these windows when she was lost in Amsterdam and wondered why they were there: "I am always curious about black people and how they got there" she said.[8] She later writes, "I say to myself, "Oh, of course there are Black people here, Curaçao, Surinam, the Dutch West Indies" (210). When Maya's brother Adrian wails "What were he and she trying to do here anyway" (182), the question exceeds existential musings and brings to relief global domination, capitalist exploitation of New World resources, and the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. Adrian and Maya are inhabitants of Curaçao, a Dutch colony; traditional maps will only lead them to their colonial "mother country", not back to their unknown homes in Africa. Once here, they navigate themselves through violence, exotification and racialisation, and resorting to unconventional means to earn money.

Maya has moved into a space where her body is objectified and marketed as a sexual commodity. Maya as a body on display calls to mind McKittrick's analysis of the slave auction block as "part of a social process that situates and localizes the moment of human sale, and in turn enables the objectification of black women and the repetitive naturalization of race-sex" (xxix). I am not conflating Maya's window with eighteenth-century slave auction blocks, but I am suggesting that the eroticising, gazing, and objectifying practices of white male ownership have not

[7] Martin Brückner, *Early American Cartographies*, p. 1.
[8] See Dionne Brand's interview with Rinaldo Walcott and Leslie Sanders.

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changed. In Amsterdam, she takes on a wealthy Flemish client, who, she knows "wanted her for the show", and that he "walked her like an exotic, showed her like spun silk from some other country" (211). He dresses in black to contrast his white beard and skin, and dresses her in white to affect a similar aesthetic difference. Maya's "black womanhood is exposed as a public space, dehumanized, and for sale" (McKittrick 88); her window and "body coalesce, and form a site of violent exchange" (88). Maya's race, gender, and nakedness "seep into the meaning of the [window]" as an exoticised "woman in the window" that the men desire to "overpower, to order around" (211). The novel suggests that "white male gaze" still desires ownership and power over her as an exotic racialised female. It is at this point, the "violence that she sensed that she was warding off, or tempting, with the domesticity of her tableaux" (212), that she started saving money to leave. The "something worse than desire" that she saw "in their eyes" (210) became a navigational marker for her journey.

Where Maya wants to sever all connections to her past, Eula "desires a coherent record of her family's past, yet this desire is thwarted by the scarcity and illegibility of written documents".[9] The format of her chapter is a literal representation of her desire: it is an epistolary in the form of a letter to her mother. Eula's letter charts her known ancestry; she refers to Kamena, Marie Ursule, Mama Bola, her daughter Bola, the child's nameless father and mother, her sister Sese, and brother Carlyle. She writes:

> I would like one single line of ancestry, Mama. One line from you to me and farther back, but a line that I can trace . . . I would like one line full of people who have no reason to forget anything, or forgetting would not help them or matter because the line would be constant, unchangeable. A line that I can reach for in my brain when I feel off kilter. Something to pull me back. (246-247)

Eula's letter connects her to her mother, and she is able to map her ancestry back to Marie Ursule, but nothing exists beyond this limited knowledge. Her sense of loss and absence is made apparent by the fact that she is writing to her dead mother and there is no recipient for her letter. The absence is a double ghost: the ghost of her lost mother and her lost history. This ghostly presence is also re-inscribed on her daughter, young Bola, who, in a moment of historical repetition, is ignorant of her true mother (she thinks her dead grandmother is her real mother), but whose consciousness becomes the recipient of the memories of her enslaved

[9] Lauren J Gantz, "Archiving The Door of No Return", p. 123.

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ancestors. “The past”, writes Michel Trouillot, “does not exist independently from the present. The past – or more accurately, pastness – is a position”.[10] The haunting past is refigured in young Bola; it comes back to haunt the diaspora in the novel.

Eula’s writing to a ghostly presence also functions for her as a way of forgetting. Instead of “one single line of ancestry [to] have no reason to forget,” she writes,

> I’m forgetting you even as I write this letter. The more I write the more I forget. Perhaps that is why I never wrote you until now, perhaps I need to forget you now, though that frightens me. (219)
> Only words might reach you now. Paper has no strength where you are. (246)

The narrative distrusts words fixed onto paper. Letters function as archival artifacts that insist on fixity. Words written on paper behave like traditional maps, such as the one on the table of the Colonial Governor, Sir George Hill. His maps are made “from the stroke of a pen designating a certain place on a map as a repository of all the mind’s doubts and worries and malevolence” (52). His map can only describe the will or hopes of “estate owners and governors” (52). His map is built on mapping conventions that Katherine McKittrick describes as built on colonists’ desire to "inhabit, map, and control what they considered an uninhabited space" (McKittrick 99). These conventions objectify, classify, relocate, and exterminate native and subaltern communities, exploit the land and its resources, and impose a colonial agenda that has material consequences on everything and everyone. The maps the diaspora uses are “subjective things, borders move all the time. There are encroachments and retreats. . . Paper rarely contains – even its latitudinal and longitudinal lines gesture continuations. Paper does not halt land any more than it can halt thoughts. Or rain showers, for that matter” (52).

Perhaps maps function as the “one single line” Eula requires to orient herself. She collects all kinds of maps, from all over the world, and turns to them whenever she is lost. But these maps are useless to her: at one point, when she is lost while driving through the United States to get to Canada, she pulls out a map noting “anyone would do, even a map of France or a map of Guyana” (231). These maps – just like Sir George Hill’s colonial maps – literally cannot help her find her way. They do not function as navigational tools but serve a more visceral function. When recounting her driving adventure in a letter to her mother in Trinidad, she

[10] Michel Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 15.

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writes that "their steadiness steadied me, it did not matter that they were not where I was. Their definite lines brought order to my head" (231). Paper maps are tangible objects, purporting to reflect the reality of her surroundings, and properly marked to give directions. Their lines suggest order and show clear connections between different points. It is their definitive nature that seduces Eula, who feels lost and unmoored. The lines on the map approximate a "single line of ancestry . . . a line [she wants to] trace" as a concrete connection to her past. As a descendant of a Caribbean slave, Eula's ancestral memory cannot go further than Marie Ursule, who she knows as the woman "with her iron ring, limping through forests" (236). She yearns for "a single" line of ancestry that resembles the "line on [her mother's] palm", and that she likens to the lines on maps, which she believes are "constant, unchangeable" (246-247). Yet these colonial maps describe spaces and places that historically and socially exclude her and other Black immigrants to Canada. Canada denies its own history of slavery and Black people because its ontological narrative is as a white nation that did not participate in the transatlantic slave trade. McKittrick writes that in Canada

> . . . blackness can be comfortably forgotten because Canadian racism effectively denies the black community any geographic relevancy [. . .] To belong as black in Canada is therefore to necessarily belong elsewhere. This process of naming Canadian blackness as Caribbean or U.S. unhinges black people from Canada, while also reducing black specificities to an all-encompassing else-where (simply non-Canadian). (99)

Eula recognises her exclusion from Canada's myth and narrative boundaries. She tells her mother that "I am so sick with seeing. It is as if a film that we usually see through that would make being human acceptable, this film has lifted from me and I find us filthy and decrepit, walking decay" (240). The Toronto she loved when she first arrived has now become a rubble. Her geography in Toronto is of poverty and exclusion. In an attempt to navigate herself out of her circumstances, she attended university. But even in this space of supposed equality, she is unable to "fit in" (238). She is conscious of her alterity, and is attuned to the way the other students' gaze renders her as different: "sometimes it wasn't even what they were saying, more that they seemed all sly, gesturing toward me with their eyes and smiles and the things they knew" (238). What the students "knew" was their inclusion in the Canadian narrative that was denied to her. Eula moves around in Toronto avoiding connections and

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permanency, knowing that "it is all happenstance, Mama, whether we are miserable or not" (258).

In *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), Christina Sharpe describes Brand's "Ruttier for the Marooned in the Diaspora" as

> . . . her offering to guide us to how to live in the wake. The 'Ruttier' is a guide to indiscipline and lawlessness; a map of disinheritance and inhabitation; a guide to how, traveling light, one might just live free of, 'refuse, shut the door on,' the weight of responsibility for one's planned demise" (131).

Sharpe conceptualises being "in the wake" as a form of "consciousness", and argues that "to be *in* the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding" (13). Thinking of maps in the wake becomes, for the Black diaspora, a way of navigating in the world defined by the "liability of one's own body" (Brand 2001, 21). The diaspora in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* navigate their journeys attuned to the historical moment of the Door of No Return, knowing that there is no place to return to, so they travel with a "set of changing locations" (224). Maya and Eula move through the world uncharted and unmoored, searching, recontextualising, and resisting the geographies "materially and philosophically" arranged according to a white positionality. History hovers over the characters in the diaspora as they try to process the contemporary legacies of colonialism. Their journeys depict the desire for an alternative to the dispersal and sense of unbelonging they have in the diaspora following the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade. *At the Full and Change of the Moon* offers a way to look at Black diasporic geographies through, and beyond, colonial projects. Maya, Eula, and the rest of Bola's diaspora may land in different locations, but, like Brand in *A Map to the Door of No Return*, they will not claim any belonging in familiar and traditional ways. As Brand contends in her two books, new ways of mapping are needed in order for the diaspora to navigate their geographies and the ways in which the past spills into the present.

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Transformative Borderlands in Nadia Ghalem's Writing

Anissa Talahite-Moodley

Introduction

Borders and borderlands have offered symbolic representations for creative writers who have used them to explore notions related to identity, journeys into the self and interactions with others. In the context of globalisation and migration, they are often considered as liminal spaces that present both limitations and opportunities for exchange and dialogue and where identities can be deconstructed and reconstructed. The writer and critic Gloria Anzaldúa makes a significant distinction between borders (as the delineating line between countries and identities) and borderlands (as spaces of transition):

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.[1]

Writing in the context of the US-Mexican border, Anzaldúa interrogates and resists the national myth of the border as delineating the contours of distinct and autonomous identities defined in oppositional terms (on a "us *versus* them" model). Instead, she proposes a subjective and dialogical vision of the borderland as a non-binary space that encompasses "a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts".[2] As liminal and fluid spaces, borderlands are thus conceived as transitional and transformative mental, physical, linguistic and psychic spaces where contradiction can be cultivated and where subjects can exist "in all

[1] G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p. 25.
[2] G. Anzaldúa, pp. 101-2.

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cultures at the same time."[3] A "consciousness of the Borderlands", to use Anzaldúa's phrase, not only engenders a critique of the commonly held notions of cultures as self-contained and homogenous entities but also offers an important symbolic and psychic space for the exploration of non-binary notions of gender and sexuality often based on rigid cultural norms.[4] As "liminal spaces [that] act to problematize and so dismantle the binary systems which bring them into being", borderlands have become a key concept in contemporary literary theory and transcultural studies.[5] The symbolism and meanings attached to borders and borderlands are therefore crucial to understand the ways in which ideas such as nation, history, culture and gender are discursively constructed and deconstructed. In this respect, literary representations, and more particularly those born of experiences of migration, offer privileged insights into such reconfigurations of borders and borderlands. Real and symbolic border crossings and reorientations abound in what is commonly known as "migrant literature", a term that has come to designate literatures that have emerged in the twentieth century as a result of mass-migratory movements often associated with postcolonial and transcultural hybridisation. These experiences have often resulted in aesthetic experimentations involving crossing borders of genres, literary forms and languages.

The case of the Algerian-Canadian author Nadia Ghalem attests to the potentiality of what could be easily termed a "borderland aesthetics". Writing from Montréal, where she has spent most of her life and has established herself as a writer, Ghalem seldom sets her narratives in one place. Instead, her novels, short stories, poetry and essays explore the zones of contact between countries and geographical locations: East/West, Europe/Africa, indigenous/settler, feminine/masculine. Her work cannot be pinpointed to one particular genre of writing as it is often characterised by a blurring of the border between prose narrative, autobiography and poetry. Nadia Ghalem weaves into her narratives the traumatic memories of the "Algerian war" for independence (1954-1962) which she experienced as an adolescent, often referring to the childhood and adolescence that her generation was denied. She often described writing as a therapeutic way of transcending the tensions and divisions inherited from the past. Ghalem's work reflects on the legacy of colonialism still present in globalised North-South relations and in the plights of migrants in the West and indigenous peoples in North America; yet her vision also envisages borders and borderlands as opportunities for

[3] G. Anzaldúa, p. 99.
[4] G. Anzaldúa, p. 99.
[5] B. Ashcroft et. al., *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 25.

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transcending dichotomous thinking and Manichean world views, as this chapter will discuss.

Nadia Ghalem has lived, studied and worked in many different countries in Europe, Africa and North America. Although settled in Canada since 1965, she has continued to consider herself as being at home everywhere in the world, carrying her homeland wherever she goes.[6] Her literary production is reflective of the complex interplay of cultures and histories that traverses her life and work and invites readers to reflect critically on borders and borderlands, their legacies and the myths they create. This chapter explores Ghalem's problematising of borders and borderlands by focusing on two of her novels: *Les jardins de cristal* (1981) and *L'amour au temps des mimosas* (2010) and the ways in which they both explore psychic and symbolic borderlands, or what Mary Louise Pratt has termed the "contact zone" between cultures, identities and civilisations that have historically been perceived as antithetical.[7] Furthermore, Ghalem's attempts at deconstructing dichotomies often posit female historical memory as a condition for establishing a connection between self and other, and within the self. As will be discussed, it is mainly the gendered dimension of border crossing that eventually allows the exiled gendered subject to reorient herself spatially, psychologically and historically.

Crossing the border within

Nadia Ghalem's first novel *Les jardins de cristal* (1981) inaugurates an introspective type of narration characteristic of her entire body of writing from novels to short stories, plays and poetry. It has been described as "the internal monologue of a woman suffering the psychiatric aftermath of the Algerian war" using "a first-person autobiographical mode to tell the story of a young Algerian woman, Chafia, now living in Montreal and her battle with schizophrenia in an American psychiatric hospital…"[8] The novel opens with a prologue setting the context for Chafia's story: An unnamed narrator tells us that she had been entrusted to deliver a parcel to Chafia's mother who is living in Paris. Through the narrator's voice, we are told that, since Chafia's demanding job does not give her time to visit her mother, she has asked her friend, the narrator of this prologue, to take a few gifts, a letter and the manuscript of a book to her. Chafia has also asked her friend — who only appears in the prologue and remains

[6] N. Ghalem, "Interview with Nassira Belloula", p. 10.
[7] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 4.
[8] S. Graebner, "Nadia Ghalem", p. 203.

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unnamed — to read out the contents of the letter and the manuscript to her mother who is illiterate (and possibly translate parts of it into dialectal Arabic), an "enormous task" that becomes the narrative frame of the novel. The last pages of this prologue feature Chafia's letter at length as it is being read out to the mother by her friend. It is followed by the main part of the text titled "Les Jardins de Cristal" which is Chafia's manuscript written in the first person.

This interplay between different voices (with two different narrating "I") frames the narration as a collective process and positions the female characters' interpretative agency as readers, narrators, translators, transmitters and listeners. This complex pattern of women speaking, translating, writing, reading and listening sets the tone and themes of the novel and is reminiscent of the polyphonic dimension of other texts by Algerian women writers, such as Assia Djebar.[9] It also places Chafia's mother at the centre of both the narration and the transformation undergone by the protagonist. The critic Margarita Casado interprets this *mise en abyme* as enacting a psychoanalytical therapeutic process whereby the enunciating "I" opening the story is distinct from Chafia's autobiographical voice, enabling the author to present the reader with a complex chorus of voices engaged in a relationship of dialogue and exchange which is akin to a psychoanalytical talking cure.[10] This dialogue will eventually allow Chafia – whose name in Arabic signifies "healer" – to exorcise the memories of the Algerian war that are haunting her and heal herself of past trauma.

The main narrative is set within the psychiatric hospital where Chafia is being treated for what doctors diagnosed as "schizophrenia".[11] In addition to describing her internment and painful journey towards recovery, the novel presents the reader with an analysis and critique of traditional psychiatry through Chafia's comments on the doctor's methods. While she describes her delirium through a poetic prose that merges hallucinatory images and reality, Chafia is also able to make rational comments on the doctor's cold, "scientific" and emotionless approach. Chafia is not ready to accept the doctor's diagnostic uncritically and contends that schizophrenia is an illness that has yet to be "proven".[12] She

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[9] For the Algerian author Assia Djebar this polyphonic method is a way of speaking "near women" rather than "speak on behalf of" or "about" women. Assia Djebar, *Women of Algiers in their apartment*, p. 14.

[10] M. G. Casado. "Les jardins de cristal de Nadia Ghalem", p. 280.

[11] Although the country where Chafia resides and where the psychiatric hospital is located is not explicitly named, several references are made to "America".

[12] N. Ghalem, *Les jardins de cristal*, p. 78 ("une maladie à prouver"). All the quotes from Ghalem's novels in the text are my own translation.

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is also vigilant of the medical discourses about her illness, calling it "her schizophrenia" and describing it as a potential "ally" (106). Throughout her illness and the narrative, Chafia retains a lucidity and self-control that allow her to describe her torment and denounce the cruel treatment she is subjected to, from the restrictive leather straps, the injections forced on her to the more pervasive mental grip of the medical institution on her person. She is able at all times to analyse her own thoughts and feelings, and at no point in her story does she lose control and insight into the specific social and historical conditions responsible for her "illness". These histories are inscribed in the doctor-patient power imbalances frequently referred to in the course of the story and enacted within a gender dynamic. Ghalem's depiction of psychiatry as a patriarchal institution recalls the approach used in novels by other African women writers, such as Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1973), in their treatment of "female insanity" as an insight into a gendered and racialised world where "male rationality" is turned into an instrument of control over what Elaine Showalter termed the "female malady".[13] Colonialism is for Ghalem closely intertwined with her critique of traditional psychiatry. In parallel to her own thoughts, Chafia recalls the painful experiences of native Americans and the destruction of their environment.[14] Mental health is thus understood within the larger socio-historical context that has shaped Chafia's past and her own experience of colonial and racial violence in Algeria that she continues to experience in America. Her illness is placed in continuity with the Algerian war against French colonial rule, evoked in the text through flashbacks about her past echoed by present-day experiences of racism present through references to the historical violence against African Americans and Native Americans. Through a complex set of images involving glass, explosions and mirrors, Ghalem places the "war", as it is generically referred to in the novel, alongside her internal turmoil.[15] Evoked implicitly, it is at the core of the novel, albeit in a non-referential and internalised manner. By keeping its referential elements unclear, the

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[13] Chafia's approach to mental disorder also recalls some of the thesis of the anti-psychiatry movement, namely the idea of mental illness as a way for the self to adjust to one's surroundings.

[14] N. Ghalem, *Les jardins de cristal*, p. 86. Indigenous populations of North America show a suicide rate higher than other groups. For more details, see N. Pollock et.al., "Global Incidence of Suicide among Indigenous Peoples: A Systematic Review".

[15] For a detailed study of the symbolic role of images associated with glass and mirrors, see R. Ibrahim, Roxana "Jeux de miroirs dans les romans de Nadia Ghalem *Les jardins de cristal* et *La villa désir*: réflexions sur la condition migrante".

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novel makes Chafia's psyche the central perspective, thus shifting the focus from the external reality to her internal world, empowering her with an ability to create and recompose her own reality. Chafia then emerges as self-healer, able to substitute her voice to the doctors' medical interpretations. As she states, "I have for a long time carried the future in my belly and the past in my head, and both were so heavy that I am not sure which one has thrown me off balance." (86)[16] Her story reads as a transgressive journey across borders in a foreign land, breaking free from the shackles of both the past and the present.

What eventually allows Chafia to heal herself is her attempt to connect with her mother and her past and reconstruct the chain of voices between women. This is apparent in the last part of the novel which corresponds to the end of the war and to Chafia's recovery. The narrator reflects on her exile in "this America made of concrete and steel" where memories of her native Algeria subside through the memories of the "blue and ochre harmonies" and the mixture of languages that were spoken.[17] Using the collective "we" to refer to the "children of war", she comments on the necessity to perpetuate a childhood that "we have to dream since we never really experienced it."[18] Ghalem brings the book to a close through a section narrated in the future tense where the narrator reflects retroactively on the traumatic past and the future and evokes her mother, the ultimate reader of the story. In a humorous tone, she recalls how her mother used to sing songs out of tune and how the lyrics of these songs were a "funny mix of Spanish, French and Arabic".[19] As in Anzaldúa's writing, multilingualism is an important instrument for blurring the border erected between cultures and resisting the attempt by the colonising power to "tame a wild tongue".[20] It is interesting to note that it is the knowledge and awareness of her mother's inventiveness and her capacity to transgress the boundaries between languages and cultures that eventually help Chafia recover from her illness.

In *Les jardins de cristal*, Chafia is able to navigate the dangerous borderland between sanity and insanity through her ability to reconnect the

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[16] "J'ai souvent porté l'avenir dans mon ventre et le passé dans ma tête, et ils étaient si lourds l'un et l'autre que je ne sais lequel des deux m'a fait basculer en premier".

[17] Page 118: "Cette Amérique de béton et d'acier avec la nostalgie toujours présente des harmonies ocre et bleues de l'Algérie."

[18] Page 119: "Nous ne voulons que perpétuer l'enfance que nous n'avons pas eue et que nous sommes obligés de rêver faute de l'avoir vraiment vécue."

[19] Page 134: "Un drôle mélange d'espagnol, de français et d'arabe…"

[20] G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, pp. 75-76.

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divided parts of herself and revisit and reinterpret her painful past. This dialogue with the self is enabled through the presence of other women who are listening to her story, particularly the central figure of the mother to whom the narrative is intended. In the last pages Chafia reflects on her journey which she interprets as an attempt to communicate with others or with "that other self that we cannot face".[21] Ghalem ends her novel as Chafia ends her narrative with a poetically intense and lyrical last reflection positioning the role of poetry and art ("an idea from Homer […] a word from Villon […] a verb from Abou El Ala El Mari") as the ultimate connection humans have with each other.[22]

Inhabiting the borderlands

In *L'amour au temps des mimosas* Ghalem continues her search for literary forms to create symbolic borderlands. The novel opens with a nameless female narrator remembering her travels around the world and a first adolescent love for a young man who one morning took a train and never returned. In a Proustian attempt to put together memories in a narrative and poetic form that would tell her story, the text weaves complex networks of relationships between places, languages, and histories. The narrative is itself halfway between a novel and a long poem, thus reinforcing the hybrid quality of the narrator's journey. Through scattered fragments of memories of places that she has travelled to, the text recreates a past that is in a perpetual flux. It is above all a past that destabilises the myth of origins as "transcendental signified" since each travel/memory is a new experience. [23] Travelling is presented in the novel as a process of making sense of a world made of ruptures and complex relations between cultures, languages and peoples. The narrative takes us to a number of destinations from Europe to North and West Africa and North America, as each place visited is an opportunity to reflect on another place, another culture, another history, for knowledge passes through the encounter with the Other and through travel. The narrator's journeys are represented as a mental process of border-crossings and juxtapositions of places and memories, associated with a thinking state that is in continual flux. Travelling is described as "the thought [that] comes and goes", as the narrator is constantly moved by a desire "to leave, to discover and to

[21] N Ghalem, p. 137: "… cet autre soi-même qu'on n'ose pas regarder en face."
[22] Ibid., p. 139: "Une idée d'Homère … un mot de Villon… une verbe d' Abou El Ala El Mari".
[23] J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 354.

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return. And to leave again to feel the detachment, the freedom".[24] By continuously moving from one place to the next through recollected memories, the narrative links border-crossing to the narrator's existential quest. Hence, borders between countries lose their material tangible reality under the force of the poetic work. They become "deterritorialized"[25] mental spaces within which the narrator moves freely from one remembered journey to the next.

The narrator's travels also function as a way of establishing a dialogue between cultural areas and civilisations often perceived as antagonistic, especially the West and the Arab-Muslim world. For example, when recounting a visit to Spain, the narrator recalls the "songs of the exiles from the Spanish civil war and the sounds of the heels of the flamenco dancers like that of the Algerian peasants" and alludes to the Spanish Republican exiles from the Franco regime who crossed the Mediterranean to find refuge in Algeria.[26] By comparing the exiles of Franco's regime with the Algerian peasants, Ghalem refers implicitly to the common fate of the two peoples and their solidarity.[27] Ghalem's historical reference to a time in the not too distant past when refugees from wars in Europe crossed the Mediterranean to seek refuge in North Africa is an important reminder of the interconnection between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.[28] It also contributes to demystifying the grand narrative of the "clash of civilisations" popularised in the media and perpetuating the idea of the world as being divided by civilisational and intrinsically oppositional fault lines, one of them being the divide between "Western" and "Islamic" civilisations.[29] By highlighting the "contact

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[24] N. Ghalem, *L'amour au temps des mimosas*, page 24 " … la pensée va et vient… Partir, découvrir et revenir. Et repartir enocore, pour ressentir le détachement, la liberté…"

[25] G. Deuleuze and F. Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 60.

[26] N Ghalem, *L'amour*, p. 57 : "Le chant des exilés [espagnols] de la guerre civile et du martèlement des talons des danseurs de flamenco comme ce- lui des paysans algériens."

[27] Some contemporary Algerian writers have depicted such solidarities in their works of fiction as, for example, *Une longue nuit d'absence* by Yahia Belaskri, which tells the plight of a Spanish Republican and the links he forges with the Algerian people during his exile in Oran.

[28] For a detailed account of the migration of Republican refugees from Spain to Algeria during the Franco era, see J. M. Leal, "The Stanbrook: a mythical boat in the memory of Republican exiles El Stanbrook: un barco mítico en la memoria de los exiliados republicanos".

[29] The term originates from Samuel Huntington's view of a world organised around

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zone"[30] where cultures and histories are deeply intertwined, Ghalem's vision runs counter to the idea of neatly delineated civilizations, thus reinforcing Edward Said's contention that "traffic across carefully maintained, even policed boundaries moves with often terrifying ease".[31]

Linguistic border-crossing is another key theme in Ghalem's writing and is often used as a means to convey the characters' multi-layered cultural experience. In a way that echoes Anzaldúa's mix of English and Spanish in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Ghalem uses plurilingualism to inhabit the ambiguous zone of the borderland. Although, unlike Anzaldúa's book, Ghalem's novel is written in one language (French), numerous references are made to the plurilingualism of the narrator's background. For example, she describes her native tongue as the hybridised dialectal Arabic "dotted with Berber, French and Spanish".[32] Furthermore, she remembers her mother's ease in using Spanish, a language she learnt as a young girl in a Catholic missionary boarding school. As in her first novel, the mother occupies a central position in the novel as a figure endowed with a capacity to cross borders and feel at home in foreign lands. As the narrator comments, "Madrid belongs to my mother. Spain belongs to my mother as if she had always lived there."[33] The relationship between the narrator's mother and Spain is described as liberating, since it is through her mother, a plural being capable of crossing linguistic borders and navigating freely between cultures, that the narrator can gain an understanding of the interconnectedness of the world. As she recalls the classical Andalusian music and songs that she had heard in her childhood, the narrator establishes a historical continuity between Spain at the time of the Moors and the present, and celebrates the rich and diverse Arabo-Andalusian past and the common heritage that reunites the two western shores of the Mediterranean. Read in the current context of the highly policed border between Europe and North Africa, the mother's joyful walk in the streets

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distinct geographical and civilisational zones: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African.

[30] Mary Louise Pratt, op. cit., p. 4.

[31] This comment made by Edward Said about Freud and Nietzche - and in response to the so-called "clash of civilisations"- can be applied to Ghalem in this particular instance. See Edward Said, "The Clash of Ignorance".

[32] N Ghalem, *L'amour*, p. 57: "… un arabe emmaillé de berbère, de français, d'espagnol".

[33] Ibid., p. 18: "Madrid est à ma mère. L'Espagne est à ma mère comme si elle y avait vécu toujours." A modified version of this passage was published in a book titled *Les Espagnes imaginaires du Québec* (edited by Carmen Mata Barreiro) under the title: "My mother's Spain" ("L'Espagne de ma mère").

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of Madrid and Toledo under the admiring gaze of her daughter acts as a symbolic trespassing of borders. Both mother and daughter are shown as having a particular propensity for crossing borders, a tradition that they carry forward from their nomadic ancestry.

As in much of Ghalem's fiction, borderlands are primarily spaces occupied by women, whether these are the main characters, their elders, friends, and other female figures from antiquity to the contemporary era often juxtaposed in an attempt to create a historical continuity between the Ancient Mediterranean world and present-day North Africa.[34] As she remembers a visit to Tunis, the narrator tells the story of the Phoenician queen Alyssa (called Dido by the Romans) who fled Tyre (in present-day Lebanon) and her dangerous brother and found refuge on the Tunisian shores where she is known to have founded Carthage, described in the novel as a democratic city later destroyed by Rome. In a style blurring the border between reality and dream, history and myth, the narrator conjures up the image of a mythical figure she calls "the Carthage lady" ("la Carthaginoise") haunting the dead city, perhaps a version of Alyssa. In a moment of daydreaming bordering on hallucination, the past and present come together in this mythical figure that speaks to the narrator in a low guttural voice "as people whose native tongue is Arabic or an oriental idiom do" to tell her to go to the city of Sousse where a contemporary feminist play *The Daughters of Tahar Haddad*, is being staged.[35] Whilst the narrator makes it clear to the reader that this figure is the product of a daydream she later describes as the "Stendhal Syndrome", the symbolism of "the Carthage lady" still lingers in the narrative as a potent presence of the past. Elsewhere in the novel, ancient and mythical figures such as Hypatia, Nefertiti and Scheherazade appear in stories told to the narrator by her aunt, Amti. Their juxtaposition with present-day women in the narrative breaks down borders between not only different parts of the Mediterranean world but also different periods of history. By piecing together memories of journeys across lands and cultures and evoking

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[34] For a discussion of women travellers in Nadia Ghalem's *L'amour au temps des mimosas*, see Anissa Talahite-Moodley, "'J'aime que mes bagages soient de plumes et de papier': voyage et écriture dans *L'Amour au temps des mimosas* de Nadia Ghalem".

[35] N Ghalem, *L'amour*, p. 70: "Une voix de gorge comme lesgens dont l'arabe est la langue maternelle ou un idiome oriental." *The Daughters of Tahar Haddad* (*Les filles de Tahar Haddad*) is a play adapted from Evelyne Accad's book *Wounding Words* (*Blessures des mots*) staged in conjunction with the feminist group Accad met in Tunisia in the 1990s. It is named after the Tunisian scholar and defender of women's rights, Tahar Haddad (1899-1935).

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memories and sensations from the past and collective memory, the narrator in *L'amour au temps des mimosas* creates imaginary borderlands between the various countries, cultures and histories encountered during her travels.

Ghalem brings together different heterogeneous territories from the Western and Southern hemispheres, from the two shores of the Mediterranean, the "East" and the "West" and, thus, uncovers the plurality and multiplicity of identities that constitute her experiences. Through creative juxtapositions, subtle associations and complex multilayered narrative structures, Ghalem's characters attempt to cross the "border within the self" and inhabit the "consciousness of the Borderlands".[36] This type of border crossing does not signify the disappearance of an identity and the birth of a new one but a continuous movement back and forth across identities. By refusing fixed discourses of identity, Ghalem's border-crossings generate a critique of the dominant narratives based on rigid and hierarchical borders that serve to support hegemonic relationships of power and, by doing so, interrogate and deconstruct the mental divide at the roots of colonial and gendered thinking. Whether it is through the critique of traditional psychiatry and its strict and normative delineation between insanity and sanity in *Les jardins de cristal* (1981) or the deconstruction of space into a multitude of spatial memories that brings into question the borders between the "West" and the "East" in *L'amour au temps des mimosas* (2010), Ghalem's approach to understanding borders and borderlands highlights the need for introspective thinking and for acknowledging the "border within us". Above all, it is an approach that invites the reader to contemplate the "deconstructive potential of the space where two cultures encounter one another which also underlies the idea of the transformative energy of the contact zone", and, by doing so, invites us to engage with the creative potential of borders and borderlands as spaces of reflection and reorientation, and eventually, personal and collective transformation.[37]

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[36] G. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p. 99.

[37] B. Ashcroft et.al., *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 25.

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Colouring Outside the Lines: Jeffrey Eugenides's Questions of Categories

Michael G. Davros

Throughout Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* ethnic, genetic, sexual, religious, and geographic borders, categories, and identities are conceptualisations in flux. Words themselves: memory, time, self, narrative, past, and present have fuzzy boundaries. In terms of genre, historicity, historiography, and fiction merge, are vexed, slip over each other. According to Stephanie Hsu, "As analytical categories, sexuality, ethnicity, and race exist in a state of mutual imbrication".[1] Boundaries shift through motifs and metaphors of roads, linking across time, history, and geography and through imagined and imaginative recollections. The Silk Roads originate east of Central Asia, continue into Asia Minor, and then across the Mediterranean and Atlantic to a Detroit tenement housing the Nation of Islam. Even the Silk Road, as though a proper noun, is not a singular road, at least historically, and because of its multiplicity is not a bordered concept. A silk thread road continues across an ocean. Roads on which transformations occur are both temporal and spatial. In order for Eugenides's character Desdemona to get a job as a silk worker, she must blur her identity: Christian/Islam, Greek/Turkish, white/black. While Aristi Trendel observes that "The novel is about reinventing your identity on different levels, be that Greek to American, female to male", an alternative reading shows that even these bounded categories are more complex.[2] Assimilation becomes the act of blurring, blending one identity into another in a failed melting pot. *Middlesex* is more "about" the interception of categories and concepts that only seem to have defined borders and limits. Language itself becomes a preoccupation of *Middlesex* when all terms and identities are questionable.

[1] S Hsu, "Ethnicity and the Biopolitics of Intersex in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*", p. 97.
[2] A Trendel, "The Reinvention of Identity in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*", p. 1.

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The only invariable concept is survival.

The central character, Cal, is the product of a genetic anomaly, the product of a history of incest impacting his sexual identity. Eugenides gender-bends his character, having been brought up female yet identifying, finally, as male. The novel is informed by transitions, transformations, and reinventions, all methods by which immigrants adjust to new surroundings. Thus, human experience becomes the effort of living in a condition of persistent flux. Eugenides positions Cal's final sexual transformation in a westbound Lincoln Continental as though the character were re-enacting the manifest destiny of so-called American progress. Thus the novel, while participating in them, becomes both a cultural and philosophical critique of accepted American values and constructs. How sexual identity is defined depends upon power structures, the medical community, the family, tradition, superstition, all categories requiring critical analysis in order for a human character to embrace even an illusive identity. What finally becomes an identity is a default mechanism of flawed history. Eugenides initiates the narrative by posing the question of what was an Ottoman Greek, and history, for example the refugees at the quay at Smyrna, is brought into question.[3]

The two characters who prompt sexual identity and other problems in Cal, and the drama of the narrative, Lefty and Desdemona, brother/husband and sister/wife and symbolically Zeus/Hera respectively, qualify as Turkish citizens by birth but are Greek by ethnicity. Although living in relative harmony with their neighbours, Lefty and Desdemona are unwelcome in the crumbling Ottoman Empire and the emerging Turkish state, both conditions of flux in which the concept of the state and nationhood are being redefined. Cal, in his westward trek, replicates the emerging nationhood pressed forward by American settlers. In one of the cultural milieux, pre-1922 Turkey, at the chiasmus of the fall of the

[3] The historical circumstances of the events in Smyrna (modern-day Izmir, Turkey) are well-established although the political circumstances are arguable. By September 1922, the Greek Army had failed in its initiative, the *Megali Idea*. This initiative sought to claim Turkish lands for Greece. Accounts vary, but not only was the Greek army unsuccessful, but the newly ascendant Turkish regime under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal embarked upon a governmentally sponsored systematic cleansing of non-Turkish populations. At the quay at Smyrna, thousands of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews were forced off the quay, into the waters of the harbour while the city behind them was set afire. Allied warships off the coast remained largely – with a few exceptions – neutral and did not assist the refugees. Many drowned or were burned. (See Ureneck, De Waal, Dobkin, Power, McMeekin, and Morris and Ze'evi).

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Ottoman Empire and the most destabilised time in the establishment of the modern Turkish state, *Middlesex* participates in a blurring of the distinctions of ethnicity and ethnic purity. With the revisiting of ethnic cleansing, segments of which Eugenides replicates as historical facts, Eugenides interrogates categories of ethnicity, and he considers how the rising new Turkish government determines whom to save and whom to kill. The stated purpose of the incipient Turkish regime is “Turkey for the Turks”, to remove Christians (mostly Orthodox) as well as people who are ethnically Greek, Syrian, Assyrian, Armenian, and Jews. The newly established state was initially created as a Muslim state by virtue of the genocide but was later established as a secular state. In its historical formation Turkey was composed by an irony: How can a state that has been cleansed of religious diversity claim to be a state dedicated to secularism, to pretend to respect other religions? If only Muslims inhabit the state, a certain ironic tautology exists, a deception that, of course it’s a secular state, but a Muslim secular state. According to David Brauner, “Cal delivers a lengthy eulogy to Smyrna, ‘a city that was no place exactly, that was part of no country because it was all countries’”.[4] From the vantage point of history, in presenting this setting in *Middlesex,* Eugenides presents destabilised categories of ethnicity and religion.

Eugenides’s inclusion of historical facts occurs in the context of a blurring of boundaries: “…the three new French citizens [Lefty, Desdemona, Dr. Philobosian] looked back at the burning city, ablaze from end to end. The fire would continue for the next three days, the flames visible for fifty miles. At sea, sailors would mistake the rising smoke for a gigantic mountain range” (62). The facts of the burning city are merged with the imaginations of “sailors”, which are themselves imagined by Cal and Eugenides. Eugenides further develops the historical facts as Cal observes, “In the country they were heading for, America, the burning of Smyrna made the front pages for a day or two” which suggests a great deal about the fleeting consciousnesses of Americans and about the news reporting industry dealing with a distant land which could exist only in the imaginations of most Americans. In Eugenides’s representations of historical facts, the boundaries are blurred even for such important realities as genocide:

> Admiral Mark Bristol of the U.S. Navy, concerned about damage to American-Turkish relations, cabled a press release in which he stated that ‘it is impossible to estimate the number of deaths due to killings, fire

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[4] D Brauner, “No Man's Land: The Transgendered Voice in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* and Rose Tremain's *Sacred Country*”, p. 158.

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> and execution, but the total probably does not exceed 2,000.' The American consul, George Horton, had a larger estimate. Of the 400,000 Ottoman Christians in Smyrna before the fire, 190,000 were unaccounted for by October 1. Horton halved that number and estimated the dead at 100,000.

Although historical facts are present, these are undercut by typical American initial reactions to genocide: denial of the incredible and consequent indifference. The legitimate answer to the question, "How many died?" would be "Unknown". In the geopolitical mix, facts are only temporary place holders to be replaced by other facts equally as transient.

When Desdemona escapes Smyrna, in her possession are the remnants of the silk worm trade that she hopes to re-establish in their new country. The silk remnants and the Silk Road itself also function to represent unstable categories. The Silk Road is not one road starting in Asia, but a number of different northern and southern routes which may be imagined maps as filaments, or strands. One might imagine the roads as symbolical representations of silk filaments. Desdemona's hope to re-establish a silk trade in the new world is dashed by immigration inspectors once she arrives in New York, seemingly the end of the line for Desdemona until she reaches an opportunity in Detroit.

As a further representation of the destabilisation of ethnic identity, as Lefty attempts to save his and Desdemona's lives from the burning quay at Smyrna, Lefty presents himself "in execrable French" as a French national in order to secure papers to escape and survive because Turkish authorities would not permit passage of Greeks from Asia Minor. Thus, nationhood is called into a deeper question. If Lefty and Desdemona travel under the aegis of French protection, what rights and obligations apply? Mixed with historical fact, the allied powers wished to appear neutral in the hopes of establishing favourable trade relations with the new emerging Turkish state, and hence were reluctant to intervene on the part of refugees no matter how many were dying. Thus, the apparent generosity of a French official is superimposed upon the stratagem of Lefty's quest for survival.

Eugenides further interrogates the categories of history, religion, ethnicity, and race when Desdemona seeks employment as a silk worker with the Nation of Islam in Detroit. The exchange between Sister Wanda and Desdemona represents Desdemona's transformation to the world of work and survival which comes at the expense of smothered identity. Sister Wanda asks, "Greek huh. That's kind of white, isn't it? You born in Greece?" (144) Were Desdemona's answer "yes", readers suspect one of Eugenides's choices would have been that she would have been immediately

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dismissed, considering that Sister Wanda shares the assumption by many Americans that Greek is a racially pure category of white. When Desdemona answers that she's from Turkey, the undercut comedy begins, and Sister Wanda responds, "Why didn't you say so? Turkey's a Muslim country. You Muslim?" Desdemona counters. "No, Greek. Greek Church." In a multi-layered response, Sister Wanda remarks, "So you probably mixed up a little bit, right? You not all white." While Desdemona is mixed up about a lot of things in America, she is not mixed up about what will permit her survival: "Everybody mixed. Turks, Greeks, same same" (145). For Desdemona, her response is and is not true. Many American Greeks would consider her response ludicrous, but a recognisable strategy for survival. The irony, of tragic-comic proportions is that in order for Desdemona to survive, she must suppress and smother her identity in a Nation of Islam founded by someone who, ironically, is not of the Nation of Islam. Setting aside her Orthodoxy, Desdemona temporarily displaces her faith. Trendel observes, "Indeed, the Church is in the heart of continuity-discontinuity dialectic. Omnipresent in the narrative, it frames the life of the group […] The pull to Orthodoxy, whether spiritual or cultural, remains strong, as religion becomes instrumental in the reinvention of ethnicity".[5] Thus, identities, categories, ethnicities, religious boundaries as represented in Desdemona's responses are destabilised, yet the destabilisation functions to permit survival.

Eugenides presents a further extension of blurred boundaries, this time adding, to ethnic and to religious, the matrimonial/sexual boundary, in the character of Jimmy Zizmo who does and does not die on a melted patch of frozen Lake Erie which consumes his automobile as he and Lefty are engaged in smuggling. Jimmy Zizmo's identity is literally submerged and he is assumed dead. Desdemona's Greek brother-in-law Jimmy Zizmo succeeds in perpetrating a hoax that he is Minister W. D. Fard whom Desdemona hears first as a disembodied voice rumbling up through a floor grating while she is working in "The Silk Room" (151). In 1933, as the narrative continues, the Nation of Islam under the new leadership of "Brother Karriem, the former Elijah Poole, is now Elijah Muhammad, Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad has a different vision for the Nation's economic future. From now on, it will be real estate, not clothing" (162). As Desdemona prepares to leave the Nation of Islam for the last time, she confronts "On the empty stage, the Prophet, the Mahdi, Fard Muhammad [who] stands behind the podium. He is barely more than a silhouette, slender and elegant, wearing a fedora that

[5] A Trendel. op. cit., p. 5.

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shadows his face" (162). Eugenides's presentation masks and masquerades, the character under veiled circumstances, "behind the podium," "a silhouette," "wearing a fedora that shadows his face." The undercut reality will serve as a revelation to Desdemona who, after her initial shock, asks, "Why you leave your wife and child?" Jimmy Zizmo, now as Fard, responds that his "only responsibility is to my people […]The Original People" (164). Even though these are not the "people" of his ethnic roots, Jimmy Zizmo has also gone through a transformation, but cryptically adds, "Much that is hidden has been revealed to me […] My so-called wife Sourmelina is a woman, of let us say unnatural appetites" (164). Thus, Eugenides writes in both comic and tragic registers.[6] The way that language is placed in Jimmy Zizmo/Fard's mouth suggests that the realities of categories are questioned. Sourmelina's lesbianism has been hidden beneath the appearances and conventions of marriage.

From stylistic and generic perspectives, *Middlesex* also deploys the strategy of the epic, a mock reference to, and parody of, the Homeric epics. But the novel engages in self-parody, at the outset through the invocation to the Muse: "And so before it's too late I want to get it down for good: this rollercoaster ride of a single gene through time. Sing now, O Muse, of the recessive mutation on my fifth chromosome! Sing how it bloomed two and half centuries ago on the slopes of Mount Olympus, while the goats bleated and the olives dropped. Sing how it passed down through nine generations, gathering invisibly within the polluted pool of the Stephanides family." Eugenides's alignment of the novel with epic poetry in self-parody blends both categories, and later "Sorry if I get a little Homeric at times. That's genetic too" elides mythic representation with genetics. As Trendel points out "As the muse of epic poetry and having Homer in her genes, he-she sings her grandparents' exodus from the massacres of burning Smyrna letting the reader surmise what Eugenides makes clear in a radio interview (Moorhem), their link with Zeus and Hera who were not only husband and wife but also siblings. The process of acculturation for the Greek couple is painful and incomplete".[7]

Historical boundaries conflate with sexual and genetic boundaries when the narrative turns to Cal's "approaching moment of discovery of myself by myself, which was something I knew all along and yet didn't know" (361). The "mutated gene" has awaited "Ataturk to attack, for Hajienestis [sic] to turn to glass" (361). In his quandary over his sexual identity, Cal feigned his female self, acting "cramps the way Meryl Streep

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[6] See B V Kostova, "Remembering Ethnicity in *Middlesex*: Trauma and the Tragicomic", p. 306.
[7] A Trendel, op. cit., p. 3.

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did accents" before he comes to a realisation of hermaphroditic possibilities (361). Cal might be "referred to under the rubric of transgender, according to Judith Butler's definition: 'Transgender refers to those persons who cross-identify or who live as another gender, but who may not have undergone hormonal treatments or sex reassignment operations'".[8] Genetics are further complicated by the historical allusion to General Georgios Hajienestis, military commander at Smyrna:

> Hadjianestis had been an odd choice to lead the Greek forces in a military campaign that by any measure would have been extremely difficult […] fifty-eight and reputed to be mentally unstable, possibly insane […] He looked like Don Quixote […] .anticipating a question from a reporter about why he was in Smyrna and not with his troops, the general said, "You know, my legs are made of glass and I cannot take the chance of breaking them." (In two months, the general, showing increasing signs of mental deterioration, would be executed by firing squad in Athens for high treason.)[9]

Eugenides chooses to use an allusion that is deliberately complicated in that Hadjianestis in himself, to his colleagues, and in the historical situation, reflects indeterminacy, the condition in which Cal finds himself: non-binary and conflicted, a moment of extreme crisis serving as a backdrop.

Time, memory, and history are interrogated as categories, ideas that disassemble the borders and edges of human thought when near the beginning of the narrative. Eugenides writes from Cal's perspective, "Of course, a narrator in my position (prefetal at the time) can't be sure about any of this. I can only explain the scientific mania that overtook my father during that spring of '59 as a symptom of the belief in progress that was infecting everyone back then. Remember, *Sputnik* had been launched only two years earlier" (9). What does Cal "remember"? Well, nothing except those events in which Eugenides places Cal as a character who experienced being born twice, once as female then as male. And the scientific community in the person of Dr. Luce, a symbolic representation of sexual reassignment physicians, is frustrated in an attempt to create a singular, binary reassignment. Thus, according to Hsu,

> *Middlesex* departs from the conventions of the social novel by refusing to offer a representative type of intersexed individual in its narrator; Cal's

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[8] Quoted in Brauner, op. cit., p. 151.

[9] Lou Ureneck, *Smyrna, September 1922: the American Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th century's First Genocide*, p. 109.

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> substitution of medical opinion for personal opinion at the moment of intersex interpellation, followed by his stated break from intersex activism, are in fact urgent reflections of the increasingly post-identitarian society that the novel works to explain.[10]

In Cal's refusal of surgery, he escapes, and eventually ends up in San Francisco at a sort of sideshow of sexual anomalies, but his escape from categorisation promotes his survival just as Lefty and Desdemona's escape from Smyrna permitted their survival. Both escapes are crisis points in the narrative and are conflated. Rachel Carroll observes, "Indeed, parallels between the kinds of national, ethnic, and racial border crossings which Cal's forebears undergo and the sexed and gendered border crossings which Cal encounters as an intersexed person are a recurring motif in this novel".[11] The conflation is clearer towards the end of the novel, and Carroll quotes that "My grandparents had fled home because of war. Now, some fifty-two years later, I was fleeing myself […] I was becoming a new person, too, just like Lefty and Desdemona, and I didn't know what would happen to me in this new world to which I'd come" (443). Thus, an ironic, perhaps unintended, ambiguity may be read here: while Cal is fleeing, he is also fleeing himself, escaping categorisation in order to survive.

Boundaries, categories, characters, people, concepts and historical events exist under erasure. *Middlesex* blurs conceptual boundaries at the very level of human thought. Readings of the novel, often situated in ideological predispositions, fail to take account of the one, invariable category: survival. In the critical episodes of characters' lives, the primary inescapable motive is the survival of the individual.

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[10] S Hsu, op. cit., p. 93.

[11] R Carroll, "Retrospective Sex: Rewriting Intersexuality in Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*", p. 189.

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PART THREE:

THE BORDERS OF POLITICS AND IDENTITY

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State Borders and Communal Boundaries in Lebanon since Independence

Michalis Sarlis

Introduction

From its creation a century ago up to the present day, Lebanon has been treading a tightrope, balancing between the external pressures of regional and international politics and the internal convulsions of a dysfunctional sectarian political system. From the very beginning of its existence, the drawing of its borders by French colonialism would prove a constant barrier for the creation of a viable national identity. In that sense, the reason for Lebanon's existence was at the same time the reason for its future predicaments. During the Second World War, Lebanon acquired its independence based on a difficult and fragile understanding between its communities regarding the country's politics and place within the new Middle East. But the turbulent geopolitics of the region, particularly from the second half of the 1960s, would be an insurmountable challenge and would have a devastating effect on Lebanon. It would fissure its external borders and at the same time it would harden its communal boundaries, making them more defined, more relevant, new "internal borders" against the weakening borders of the state. The multiple shocks by the numerous regional crises would accelerate this process and by the beginning of the 1970s, the boundaries between Lebanon's communities had become the only prism through which they could see the future of the country.

Greater Lebanon and French colonialism in the Levant

The state of modern Lebanon was formed by the French government on the basis of a colonial concept: the carving of Mount Lebanon, the coast and the surrounding area as an entity of secure French control and the weakening and isolation of the Syrian heartland. The main aim of the

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French policy in the Levant was to transform the region into an integral part of its colonial axis that extended from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean across the Middle East to French Indochina.[1] Another aim was the suppression of the rising Arab national movement in Syria, which Paris feared it could expand to the French colonies in North Africa.[2] A new and fragmented political geography was, according to the French government, an absolute prerequisite for the success of France's Levantine policy. This led to the violent termination of the Arab national aspirations and the creation of new borders across the region, from the Mediterranean to the eastern Syrian desert.

Within less than six months, from April to September of 1920, France pushed forward with the main elements of its colonial policy in the Levant. On 25 April, at the Conference of San Remo, France and Britain, which had already received the mandates from the League of Nations, finalised the new details of their old ambitions for the Middle East. On 24 July, in the battle of Maysalun, French troops routed the Syrian army of Faisal, who on 7 March had been declared king of Syria by the national congress in Damascus. Faisal and many of his supporters were sent into exile. By August, and having used Beirut as a base in order to strike at the heart of the rising Syrian national movement, France had imposed its control in the Levant. On 1 September 1920, in Beirut, General Henri Goureaud declared the creation of the state of Greater Lebanon.

At the heart of this new state lay Mount Lebanon with its Christian majority and Druze minority. The Christians and especially the dominant Maronite Christian community had been France's ally, particularly since the autonomous states of the Ottoman period. Around the geographical and political core of Mount Lebanon and in order to make the new state economically viable, the French mandate added the four coastal city-ports of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre and the regions of Baalbek, Hasbaya, Rashaya and Akkar.[3] All these regions were mostly populated by Muslim communities, mainly Sunni but also Shia. In that way, the French authorities enclosed within the borders of the new state of Greater Lebanon a mosaic of religious communities. Furthermore, the Christian community, which had been the majority on Mount Lebanon, was now part of a larger multi-communal state where there was no clear majority between Christians and Muslims.

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[1] J. McHugo, *Syria: A Recent History*, pp. 69-70.
[2] P. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, pp. 53-54.
[3] F. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, p. 80.

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Further east, in Syria, which had been cut off from its main gates to the Mediterranean – the ports of Beirut and Tripoli - French colonial authorities carved its territory into small administrative entities: the state of Damascus, the state of Aleppo, the Alawi state in the northwest and the Druze state in the south, while autonomy was also given to the Kurdish-populated northeast Jazeera region. The main aim of this administrative mosaic was the maximum delay of the rise of an independent Syrian state at the heart of the Middle East. By 1920, Paris had imposed an extensive political fragmentation across the Levant in an attempt to suppress the national aspirations of its peoples and to maintain the region within its colonial axis. Soon, Beirut was declared the seat of the French High Commission for the states of the Levant, bringing for the first time Damascus and Syria under the authority of Beirut.[4]

But within the confines of the new state, the various religious communities had already supported different ideas about the future of the region. The Muslim community reacted immediately, and in cases violently, after the declaration of Greater Lebanon. The objections of the Muslim community against the creation of Greater Lebanon were rooted in the rejection of the French partition of Syria but also in political and economic grievances which arose through the already sectarian power structure of the new state. Such as the recruiting for the new administration, which relied heavily on the Christian community, but also the economic damage that the city-ports had suffered by being separated from the Syrian interior.[5]

But even among the Christian community there were expressions of concern about the demographic composition and viability of the new state. Already after the end of the Ottoman rule, but also after the declaration of Greater Lebanon, there were voices among the Maronite community, albeit a small minority, which had called for the creation of a "Small Lebanon" that would include the Mount and would be safeguarded by French protection, but most importantly, by the sectarian homogeneity of its demographic composition. The Lebanese journalist and writer Samir Kassir observed that this idea was resurrected by the Maronite Christian political elite more than half a century later, during the civil war of 1975.[6]

There were also prominent Christians, among them Michel Chiha, the Greek Catholic editor of the newspaper *Le Jour*, who supported French protection by promoting a neo-Phoenician identity, which, according to him, was based on the distinct identity of Lebanon and its

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[4] P. Mansel, Levant, p. 299.
[5] F. Traboulsi, *History*, p. 81.
[6] S. Kassir, *Beirut,* p. 334.

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Mediterranean connection to European civilisation.[7] Generally, Christian perspectives on the new state were affected by their perception of Lebanon as a distinct entity within a Muslim region, but also through the Christian view of the Sunni community's attachment to Syria. From that point onwards, the new state of Lebanon would be viewing its own existence in relation to the two opposite reflections of Syria and the West.

With the introduction of the constitution in 1926, the state of Greater Lebanon became the Republic of Lebanon. While the French mandatory administration still held control of the country, the 1926 constitution institutionalised further the sectarian character of the new state. This had its roots in the autonomous Mount Lebanon of the Ottoman period. Even though the constitution had a parliamentary character, the presidential post was enhanced with extended powers. This was a constitutional confirmation of the dominant position of the Christian community within the power structure of the republic, as well as the limits of the political power that the Sunni Muslim community could exercise.[8]

The expansion of the Second World War in the Middle East triggered events that would have profound repercussions for Lebanon. In 1941 France was obliged to formally recognise Syria and Lebanon as independent states, but as Patrick Seale wrote, "the essential prerogatives of sovereignty – full legislative and administrative powers and control over the armed forces – had to be wrested inch by inch from the French over the next four years."[9] In the summer of 1943, elections in Lebanon and Syria brought to power new governments with clear nationalist agendas. In September 1943, Maronite Christian Bishara al-Khoury and Sunni Muslim Riad al-Solh agreed on the details of the National Pact and the amendments to the constitution. The French reacted by arresting the Christian and Sunni leaders, but under pressure from popular demonstrations and the British, they were soon forced to set them free. The French position in the Levant was becoming ever more untenable and by 1946 the last French troops had left both Lebanon and Syria.[10]

Between independence, sectarianism and national identity

Lebanon's independence was sealed by one document and one agreement which would become central in the country's modern history, the constitution

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[7] Ibid., p. 262.

[8] R. Crow, "Religious Sectarianism in the Lebanese Political System", p. 494.

[9] P. Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945-1958*, p. 25.

[10] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

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and the National Pact. The constitution of 1943, an updated version of that of 1926, retained sectarianism at the core of the power structure of the new independent state on the basis of the 1932 census, the last officially conducted in Lebanon, which produced a very slight majority of the Christians. The three main articles of the constitution - 9, 10 and 25 - which highlighted the importance of the confessional communities and sectarianism within the political structure, were also retained.[11]

The National Pact was an attempt to define the national identity of Lebanon and its position in the world as a newly independent state, as well as to ameliorate the insecurities and fulfill the demands of its Christian and Muslim citizens. Lebanon would be an independent state of Arab identity, rejecting Syrian unity schemes and western protectionism. In effect, the National Pact aimed to define Lebanon's national identity on the basis of an understanding between the two largest religious communities of the country, the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims. The Christians were guaranteed their political position within the Lebanese power structure without the need of French or other western protection, while the Muslims were guaranteed the Arab identity of the new state and their larger participation in its power structure but strictly within an independent Lebanon.

Furthermore, it was agreed that the allocation of the three top governmental posts would go to representatives of the three largest confessional communities. So, the President of the Republic would be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of Parliament a Shia Muslim. The post of the chief of the armed forces was also given to a Maronite Christian. Election to parliament was agreed on a Christian-Muslim ratio of six to five and participation in the Cabinet would include the six largest communities.[12] Nevertheless, the enhanced presidential powers of 1926 were also retained in the new constitution and while the two other posts – of the Prime Minister and Speaker – were distributed accordingly as a form of a sectarian counterweight to the political power of the Maronite Christians, the actual political effect of this counterweight would be minimal.

In fact, the wider compromise of the National Pact was built, from the very beginning, with a structural asymmetry which would prove critical when the circumstances became challenging. It was the asymmetry between the real political and economic power that the Maronite Christians had retained under the National Pact and the political and

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[11] R. Crow, "Religious", pp. 492-496.
[12] Ibid., pp. 492-496.

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economic promises that were given, as part of this compromise, to the Muslims of Lebanon, both Sunni and Shia. This asymmetry would be at the core of almost every major crisis Lebanon would face in the future. The main challenge that Lebanon would face after independence was the unachievable conception of a viable national identity. While it was true that for a certain period, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s, there had been a cross-sectarian struggle to achieve independence, eventually it became apparent that this urge for independence and self-rule would not have enough thrust to hold Lebanon's political fabric together and absorb the impact of the regional shocks that were about to be unleashed.

A number of factors were at play here. One was related to the effects on the new state by the decolonisation period. A period when, as Clifford Geertz describes, "the general forward motion of the 'new nation as whole' has been replaced by a complex, uneven, and many-directioned movement by its various parts, which conduces to a sense less of progress than of agitated stagnation."[13] Even though Lebanon experienced an economic surge from the 1950s, mainly due to the increase of foreign capital, the oil boom and tourism, the new state had not solved the structural issues which had required a political compromise in order for the political elites to move forward with independence. Far from it, the uneven economic boom would prove instrumental in gradually widening the economic and social inequalities of Lebanon and as a result the political rift among its communities.[14]

One other factor was the actual crystallisation of the sectarian nature of the power structure of Lebanon. The pursuit of a viable collective identity had predated independence. Indeed, it had been a prerequisite of independence and therefore of the decolonisation process of Lebanon. But at the same time, because of the difficulties that this pursuit entailed, the solution was sought and found in the idea of continuity. The National Pact, along with the constitution of 1943, represented a moment of continuity and not of change. The institutionalisation of the sectarian character of the state and of the political power structure of Lebanon's multi-communal society, emulated forms of pre-independence power-sharing. In this way, the inter-communal compromise of 1943 crystallised sectarianism within the structure of the independent state of Lebanon.

The main difference this time, the third factor, was the actual postcolonial period of Lebanon, its independent status within a region that was already beginning to feel the turbulent effects of the Cold War.

[13] C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 236-237.
[14] S. Kassir, *Beirut*, p. 453.

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Independent Lebanon, released from foreign administration, had to develop all the necessary manners, processes and reactions, all those elements that constitute a foreign policy, vis-à-vis the policies of established states, but also towards the ideological trends and strategic aspirations of the regional powers and the global superpowers. As if this were not challenging enough, in the case of Lebanon this had to be done in a way that would not transgress the 1943 compromise, but also in a way that would not threaten or affect the internal sectarian balance.

Lebanon and the multiple crises of the Middle East

Toward the end of the 1950s, and already shaken from the regional shock that the Suez Crisis had unleashed throughout the region, Lebanon entered into a long period of successive regional crises that would apply growing pressure on its internal sectarian balance and would eventually break the straps that sustained the power and cohesion of the state. During that period, the Middle East was gradually becoming an arena for the strategic and ideological competition between the two superpowers, between American foreign policy and the leading Arab power, Egypt, as well as between Nasser's Arab nationalism and the pro-Western policies of the Arab conservative regimes.

The announcement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, in January of 1957, a sign of the American intent to deepen its involvement in the affairs of the Middle East, became a contentious political issue for Lebanon. Camille Chamoun, the Maronite Christian president, had declared his support for the new American policy, mostly in an attempt to renew, against the constitution, his presidential term.[15] This political crisis, the first major one since independence, was exacerbated by the tectonic events that began to unroll across the Levant. In February 1958, under pressure and in the light of Nasser's post-Suez power, Damascus turned to Cairo for protection and Syria united with Egypt in the form of the United Arab Republic. Gamal Abdel Nasser's regional influence reached meteoric levels, setting in motion the ideological fault lines of the region and causing political crises across the Middle East, from Lebanon to Iraq. It was a period when the thrust of ideological forces such as Arab nationalism did not take into account geography, state borders or inter-communal understandings.

[15] S. Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*, pp. 205-206.

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Lebanon, due to the factors described previously, was particularly vulnerable to these sudden movements which crossed national borders and inflamed political passions. The internal fault lines of the country were widened by these external influences and the historic compromise of 1943 could not prove adequate to bridge them. Lebanon's political fabric appeared now full of fissures through which this external pressure was internalised and the regional crises that were unfolding were increasingly acquiring a Lebanese dimension.

In May of 1958, the pressure applied by President Chamoun's courting of the West and the Syria-Egypt unification, combined with the pre-existing sectarian differences and political friction, erupted into armed confrontation in Beirut and elsewhere, mainly between Maronite Christians, who supported the western orientation of the country, and Sunni Muslims, who aspired to see Lebanon become part of the United Arab Republic. The armed confrontation moved toward its ending after the landing of American marines on the shores of Beirut on 15 July, one day after the bloody overthrow of the monarchy in Baghdad by a radical wing of the Iraqi army. The resignation of Camille Chamoun and his replacement by Fouad Chihab, commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces who was credited with keeping a neutral stance during the sectarian war, stabilised the situation.

But the internal sectarian balance had taken a serious blow and the fragile threads that kept the political fabric together had snapped, as Lebanon had descended into the first civil war of its modern history. From that point onwards, the fissures in the political and social fabric of Lebanon would only grow, allowing external pressures to combine with internal structural changes that seventeen years later would lead Lebanon into another, this time much steeper and far darker descent. After the crisis, Lebanon, in an attempt to return to a more stable condition, returned to the historic "normal", as it had done in 1943, when it chose to fall back to the pre-independence forms of communal power-sharing. But once again, the internal structural changes and the regional currents were moving at their own faster pace and were not taking into account the compromises and understandings in the higher echelons of the Lebanese polity.

The reprieve for Lebanon lasted no more than a decade, until 1967, when the Six Day War shattered the illusion of stability. The equally shattering defeat of the Arab armies and the dramatic transformation of the political geography of the Middle East would have profound repercussions for Lebanon. The fragile internal balance of the country was once more exposed to the impact of a powerful shockwave and as the different communities began to have opposing views of events the sectarian fault line was widening again, prompting them to withdraw to the familiar

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boundaries of their own separate identities.

The unravelling of the state in Lebanon

After the Arab defeat of 1967, things began to shift and change within the fragile Lebanese polity. Nasser's regional stature had been undercut, the Syrian Baath had lost the Golan and Israel seemed invincible. These dramatic events had a profound impact on many Lebanese political parties, which already from the 1950s were claiming a higher stake within the power structure. The Phalange (*Kataib*), the Maronite Christian political party, viewed these regional developments as the beginning of a new period for Lebanon and the Middle East, full of dangers but also of opportunities. After almost ten years of supporting Shihab's policy of entente, the Phalange Party shifted back to the policy of religious polarisation.[16] This shift continued with the formation of the Tripartite Alliance, a Maronite bloc of three parties, a move that further highlighted a return to sectarian politics. In parallel with this shifting of forces and positions within the Christian community, parties that belonged to the left ideological spectrum and mostly supported by members of the Druze and Sunni communities, also started to mobilise and would eventually converge and create the Lebanese National Movement.

At the same time, but mostly after the Jordanian crisis of 1970, a new factor entered the already volatile political arena of Lebanon, the Palestinian national movement. In Lebanon there were already Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war. New refugees arrived after 1967, while the bulk of the PLO fighters arrived in Lebanon after their defeat by the Jordanian army in September 1970. Having failed in Jordan, the PLO leadership decided to turn Lebanon into the territory from where they could launch their campaign to retake the occupied territories from Israel.[17] The Palestinian fighters found in Lebanon a weak state and a friendly Arab Muslim community and they soon took control not only of the Palestinian refugee camps, but also of parts of Beirut and the south of Lebanon. The Maronite Christians, unlike the Sunni Muslims, viewed the Palestinian presence as a direct violation of Lebanese sovereignty, considered the Sunni Palestinians as a demographic threat to the fragile communal balance and perceived them as a serious threat to their political status.[18] At the same time, the frequent Israeli military strikes inside

[16] F. Traboulsi, *History*, p. 153.
[17] R. Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, pp. 74-75.
[18] R. Khalidi, "Lebanon in the Context of Regional Politics: Palestinian and Syrian

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Lebanon were exerting massive pressure on the already weak Lebanese state.

After 1973, there were more shifts of political forces and even more layers to the developing internal antagonisms in Lebanon. The Shia Muslims of Lebanon, for a long time politically and economically at the margins, abandoned their traditional quietist stance under the leadership of the charismatic cleric Imam Musa al Sadr. In the face of the increasingly confessional polarisation that was taking over the political life and the weakening of the Lebanese state, they too withdrew within their own identity boundaries and started to mobilise in order to safeguard the interests of their community.[19] Al Sadr founded the Shia organisation *Harakat al Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived) and later on its military arm, *Amal*.

In the meantime, within the confessional and ideological cauldron that Lebanese politics were rapidly becoming after the new Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the newly strengthened parties of the Lebanese left and the ever more independent Palestinian movement were converging into forming a united front that would attempt to challenge the National Pact and to force the restructuring of the sectarian system of Lebanon. From the Palestinians' perspective, the overthrow of the Maronite Christian political preeminence would turn Lebanon into the ideal military and ideological base for their struggle against Israel.

After the 1973 war and the ceasefire agreements that followed the American diplomatic involvement, the gravity of the Arab-Israeli confrontation was directed toward Lebanon, where the PLO, unlike Egypt and Syria, continued its military struggle against Israel and where the situation was on the verge of a major crisis. By 1974, the unravelling of the state in Lebanon had accelerated, as the different confessional communities were being mobilised around paramilitary organisations which had now become the main protective and security mechanism of each respective community.

The resurgence of confessional polarisation after 1967 and the introduction of the Palestinian fighters after 1970 had not only pushed Lebanon's communities within their identity boundaries, but had led them to the militarisation and securitisation of these boundaries. Lebanon's sovereignty and independence were now associated not only with how each community viewed its position within Lebanon, but also with the way Lebanon was perceived within a changing Middle East. By 1975, the

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Involvement in the Lebanese Crisis", p. 499.

[19] A.R. Norton, *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, pp. 39-41.

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new urban geopolitics of Beirut were converging with regional events and re-alignments. The presence of the PLO leadership and most fighters in the capital, along with the ever-growing confessional polarisation between the Maronite Christians and the Muslims and Druze of the Arab left coalition, were transforming Lebanon into the next front of the next conflict in the Middle East. The second civil war of Lebanon, the biggest and most destructive crisis in its modern history, began on 13 April 1975. It would last fifteen years and it would lead to the complete unravelling of the state in Lebanon.

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BELFAST LANGUAGES: PARENTING IN PARAMILITARY CONTEXTS (OR BELFAST: SECTARIAN BORDERS OR COMMON COMMITMENT?)

HEDWIG SCHWALL

Introduction

In 2020, Galway was the European Capital of Culture, and one of its components was *Aistriú.*This Irish word means *translation*, *migration* and *transformation*. The organisers offered a number of texts written by Irish migrants on forms of migration (from one country to another, from mermaid to human etcetera) to be translated by anyone who wanted to take part. The *Aistriú* website proclaimed the hope, now Europe is faced with unprecedented migration, that "twentieth-century Gaelic texts provide a vocabulary to respond to contemporary challenges".[1] And while Corona cancelled many of the European Capital's events, the translation project thrives. Because this is a job everyone can do from home: translators working connected from their Dutch, German, Chinese, Spanish and other desks, quilting together a colourful set of texts which will keep migrating in their digital form.

But the boundaries I want to focus on here are to be found within a Northern Irish context, more specifically in the microcosm of Belfast. It seems that the many rules and walls erected there by a constrictive male culture since the beginning of the Troubles are now being articulated by women in a different, constructive way. Lucy Caldwell's and Wendy Erskine's short stories, Rosemary Jenkinson's stories, plays and columns, Rita Duffy's art work (especially the *Softening the Border* and *The Raft Project*) are examples in case; but here I want to limit my analysis to two novels, and compare how Anna Burns' *Milkman* (2018) and Jan Carson's

[1] http://www.nuigalway.ie/aistriu/

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The Fire Starters (2019) look at sectarian life.[2] Juxtaposing them shows that paramilitaries, whether in the Catholic enclave of Ardoyne in the North side of Belfast (Anna Burns) or the Protestant East side (Jan Carson), use similar means of oppression to create similarly surreal kinds of violence.

We will start with a brief fact-finding survey culled from Glenn Patterson's most recent book *Backstop Land*, in which the author proves to be an excellent annalist and analyst of Northern Ireland, twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement (his report covering events up to September 2019). As I hope to show, Burns, Carson and Patterson all seem to agree on two big points. First, they see that the fundamental issues of economics and education are exacerbated by the paramilitaries' dividing rule and can only be tackled by politics of cooperation. Second, the problems of sectarian rule are rooted in psychology; more specifically, they are the "politics of the death drive", as I hope to show now.

Br/exit Land?

The last murder in Northern Ireland broadly reported in international media was that of the freelance journalist Lyra McKee. This was committed by Saoradh, a splinter group of the Provisional IRA. Shortly after the killing its chairman, Brian Kenna, was reported to have said that "violence will continue while there was a border of any kind" (*Backstop Land* 101).[3] This statement is gigantically and painfully ironical: as the word "sectarian" indicates, the first and foremost thing paramilitaries do is create borders of different kinds on many levels, dividing their own region, its cities, families and even its individual citizens. The novels under scrutiny will amply illustrate this, but we will first see how Patterson's book, based on statistics, journalism and literature, shows how the paramilitaries impose a politics of exclusion which splits groups and sabotage solidarity. First of all, they counteract any co-operation among people with the same needs:

> It is regularly stated that Orangeism prevented working-class Protestants from making common cause with their working-class Catholics. Could it be that militant republicanism – for all the rhetoric – has done the same thing in reverse? (*BL* 98)

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[2] I discussed several of Rita Duffy's anti-sectarian art works in "Reknitting Communities: Rita Duffy's Vital Gestures".

[3] Henceforth *Backstop Land* will be abbreviated to *BL*, *The Fire Starters* to *FS*, *Milkman* to *M*.

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Second, instead of liberating their communities it looks as if paramilitary-run areas do just the opposite: they imprison and threaten their own: "both loyalist and republican paramilitaries have kept up an almost constant campaign of attacks against people in – what they would claim were – their own communities" (*BL* 120). Third, instead of educating their children – Latin *ex-ducere* meaning "leading out" of the original circles of life to look into new horizons and bring new ideas to enrich their community – the paramilitaries narrowed people's scopes, not just in economic and social ways, but even more intimately, in their perceptions of daily life. In undemocratic systems nuances fall away, emotions become negative and reasoning blurred. The single and only rule is not "to break the ranks"; obedience overrules moral discernment; "embarrassment has always been in pretty short supply here" (*BL* 94). But fourth and most worrying maybe is that exclusion, fragmentation and confusion lead to self-destruction. People who commit violence think they are in control, while forgetting about the rebound on their own families, not only in their own lifetime but also in future generations.

Patterson's statistics are harrowing, especially when young people are concerned. Apparently "approximately half of all people killed in the Troubles were aged 29 or under" (*BL* 124). He also points out that as many people had killed themselves since the Troubles as had died in them (*BL* 88); and that one in five of self-inflicted deaths between 1999 and 2014 were under twenty-five years old. Moreover, many children suffer as their parents struggle with mental health issues – the number of traumatised parents being estimated at forty per cent of the population.[4] And on top of that comes the "communal" violence, the "child abuse by armed groups" who punish especially "young working-class males" (*BL* 122), often drug-related, often merely ideological, but never in any juridical framework. So as well as being underprivileged these youngsters suffer from torture by paramilitaries – more than 4000 cases have been reported since 1998. Besides, paramilitaries parasitise on local businesses, demanding protection money and thus hampering the struggling, remaining initiatives.

Death and Life drives

The opposition between imprisoning, self-destructive culture on the one hand, and enabling, educating developments on the other reflects the opposition between what Freud called the death and life drives (*Thanatos*

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[4] Forty per cent experienced a traumatic experience, fourteen percent have a mental illness and eight point eight percent display symptoms of PTSD (*BL* 89).

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and *Eros*, in his terminology) which he saw as the mechanism which steers each person's psychic system. Jacques Lacan specified that the interaction between these two forces forms a person's emotions, temperament, decisions – in short, the overall personality.[5] Indeed as Paul Moyaert shows, emotions start in gut feelings and are further filtered into ethical choices: the drives are "at work in the individual's body" and "create […] value and significance" (101). Death drives bring about "a blind, nonfunctional, and repetitive movement" which "pressurize[s] the vital forces" while life drives make one see things anew, they are "multifunctional and varying" and make for an upbeat personality (97). While the Eros forces are constructive, the former are constrictive, and can be further distinguished in two types. Indeed some death drives can be so oppressive that they lead people to inertia and apathy, while others are excessive, steering people's behaviour into mania.

It is interesting to see how the *thanatos* and *eros* drives also bring about a different kind of repetition. Death drives are limiting in their "repetition, to which Freud fixes the label 'daemonic'" (Moyaert 103); they produce "a claustrophobic and uncanny reality" (Moyaert 105). The repetition of life drives, on the contrary, is enabling. Freud illustrates this with the famous example of the *Fort-Da* game which enabled his grandson to come to terms with his worries. When the baby threw a bobbin away (German *fort*) to haul it back (*da*), the controlled repetition helped him to "come to terms with" the intermittent absence of his mother. Such actions are "directly pleasurable for the child because, by means of the game, he gains mastery over the situation. […] the well-being of the ego profit[s] from it" (Moyaert 105). One might say that there are two main components to human life: on the one hand there is the law, "the symbolic order", on the other there is the vital space for personal play. Though Lacan stresses the absolute necessity of a culture's set of rules, he also warns that it is "simply the fundamental tendency of the symbolic order to produce repetition".[6] If communal rules do not allow for personal development the death instinct will suffocate the community's members and culture will turn into a vulture. At that point a society becomes negative, producing "antiproductivity" (Moyaert 94).

Both Burns' *Milkman* and Carson's *The Fire Starters* highlight the impact of the drives, with a focus on the difficulties of parenting in a paramilitary context. Yet though in both novels psychology is important,

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[5] "The distinction between the life drive and the death drive […] manifests two aspects of the drive" wrote Jacques Lacan, quoted in Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, p. 33.
[6] Lacan quoted in Evans p. 32.

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they are very different in style. *Milkman* presents the reader with an anonymised allegory in perfect analogy to the paramilitary worlds in the "statelet" under scrutiny [Northern Ireland]. That no one ever gets a proper place in this society – not even the paramilitaries themselves, who "thought nothing of now and again disappearing each other" (*M* 258) – is reflected in the fact that no one ever gets a proper name. This leads to a Swiftean confusion between the two opposing groups, the super-narcissists, represented by so-called Milkman, and the anti-narcissists whose hero is real Milkman. *The Fire Starters* reminds one more of Charles Dickens' technique of the "streaked bacon" as it alternates between two groups of people. But while Dickens's rich and poor people, constituting the "Two Nations" of nineteenth-century Britain, lived far apart, Carson repeats this tension within the micro-subcosmos of East Belfast. Both her heroes are born and bred there; Jonathan lives "just five minutes up the road from Sammy, though the distance between them is continental. […] It isn't just money. It's education and reputation, and something harder to pin down; a whole different way of carrying yourself through life" (*FS* 11). So the fragmentation of the society is reflected in the alternation between the chapters. But in both novels it is the children who rescue the parents: Burns' heroine helps her mother to escape the stereotype moulds of feeling and relating; Carson's one father figure, Sammy, is shown by his son Mark how negative stereotypes can take root; while Sophie's appeal to her father, Jonathan, gradually opens him up, finally revealing to him that children have to be given leeway to find their own future.

In the hiatus of Authority power steps in: The Death Drive as the engine of power

As Patterson pointed out, politicians have not taken their responsibility in the past years. The chapter on Stormont[7] in *Backstop Land* is one empty page long; it contains merely a title: "The complete works of the Northern Ireland Assembly since January 2017" followed by a blank (*BL* 31). In Carson's novel "[t]he politicians … look glass-eyed" (*FS* 15); when they "open their mouths …[w]hat comes out is the spoken equivalent of a deep shrug" (*FS* 132). "Nothing has been resolved or achieved but this is not considered failing. This is how it has been in Belfast every summer since the Agreement" (*FS* 204). The result is a disastrous economy, as Carson shows in numerous metonymies: Harland and Wolff's shipyards are empty, "There are no future boats" (*FS* 8); the only trade mentioned is "the East's

[7] The parliament of Northern Ireland.

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drug culture" (*FS* 114); and the people can only afford "Poundland" crockery. Burns' panorama also includes effects on the people's emotionality, their motivation: "all ramifications [are] …stemming from poverty and these stubborn, entrenched political problems" (*M* 146).

Instead of authority there is sheer power, on a strictly local basis. It is undemocratic: "The renouncers had elected themselves rulers of the roost here" (*M* 235). In these para-worlds the politics of exclusion are ingrained to the extent that all signs of public spirit are attacked: "Parts of the East are so volatile that postmen require helmets and bulletproof vests. When the kids are rioting, anyone in a uniform is liable to be bricked" (*FS* 91); "anybody wearing a uniform or garments easily to be mistaken for a uniform were also the enemy" (*M* 14).

Whereas authority is based on compromise between elected parties and common attempts at a consistent symbolic system, the no-go areas are subject to sets of unwarranted rules of unclear origin and random change. *Milkman* depicts the male paramilitaries "Overreaching themselves with their rules and regulations, expecting everyone […] to go along with the preposterousness of the silliness they had concocted as rationale in their heads" (*M* 159). The protagonist's mother calls the paramilitaries "sociopaths, maybe even psychopaths [with]… their warlike individualism and single-minded mentalities" (*M* 122). They destroy what they create, alienating members of the community and of the family from each other, and even from themselves. They make people marry and then their 'cause' causes splits the family "owing to blood connections with both victim and perpetrator" (*M* 220). The death drive is omnipresent in the negative emotions on which family life is built. Burns calls it "'this marrying of the wrong spouse' business […] I mean this business of people marrying people they didn't love and didn't want" (*M* 255).

> Great and sustained happiness was far too much to ask of it. That was why marrying in doubt, marrying in guilt, marrying in regret, in fear, in despair, in blame, also in terrible self-sacrifice was pretty much the unspoken matrimonial requisite here. (*M* 256).

Doubt, guilt, regret, fear, despair and blame are the feelings which fuel the "totalitarian-run enclaves" (*M* 120) but most important is shame, which

> seemed more potent than anger, more potent than hatred, stronger even than the most disguised of emotions, fear. Whether you were the one doing the shaming, the one witnessing the shaming, or the one having the shame done unto you. Given it was such a complex, involved, very advanced feeling, most people here did all kinds of permutations in

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> order not to have it; killing people, doing verbal damage to people, doing mental damage to people and, not least, also not infrequently, doing those things to oneself (*M* 53).

It is under the pressure of such unrelenting surveillance that individual members of a "community" are alienated from themselves, so that the death drive drains the protagonist's personal motivation: "From the moment I'd left teacher […] and up towards my own area, I'd felt that constriction, that insidious '*There's no point, what's the use, what's the point?*'" (*M* 139). The contrast with the protagonist's ingrained positive stance couldn't be greater: while battling against defeatism the young woman was planning to bury a dead cat, out of sheer respect for its decapitated body that was left to the mercy of the elements; but the Antigone-like gesture almost fails when so-called Milkman comes upon her threatening to kill her boy-friend. It is near-impossible for the protagonist to withstand the insidious power of paramilitary threat, and she feels her resistance leaking away: "I, too, came to find me inaccessible. My inner world, it seemed, had gone away" (*M* 178).

In Carson too, pure negativity with lack of consistency is the rule, and its effects run through all ages. The "masked children" of East Belfast combine violence with futility, triumphant to rescue an ice-cream from a van they burnt down, "choc ices […] lifted, just in time, from the van's freezer" (*FS* 135). Life is one big round of demonic self-destruction: "Two young fellas are knee-capped, still wearing their pipe-band uniforms" (*FS* 140). Sammy, the ex-paramilitary who is one of Carson's protagonists, observes how an old man asks some youngsters to burn his house down before he goes into a care home: "I just don't want the government getting their hands on my wee house. When you go into a home they take all your assets to pay the fee. It's daylight robbery, so it is" (*FS* 41). Sammy is disheartened by it but as he wants to take some responsibility for it he tries to situate the origins of this violence which he calls a "disease" (*FS* 47) and ascribes it to the city's history of which he is a part. He has become aware of the transgenerational effect of his own violence: "He needs to tell his son that violence is a passed-down thing" (*FS* 47). "Your uncles are cut from the same old sheet too […] The rage runs through us all" (*FS* 101). Most significant to me is that Sammy indicates that their paramilitary violence "was never about the politics", it was about some dark energy in himself: "I would not have stopped for your mother, or my mother, or even the cause calling me into line" (*FS* 103). He knows that "The Tall Fires have not been started by a faraway enemy. This is the kind of violence a group of people will do to themselves" (*FS* 16). Ageing, the ex-paramilitary realizes that giving in to anger breeds much more than individual effects

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and that it only creates “anti-productivity”: “Young men setting fires and flinging themselves into violent situations, ruining their futures for an ideal already failed” (*FS* 84).

Life drives: authorising the Other

But of course there are highlights of hope in both novels. *Milkman*’s narrator celebrates the *eros* forces in her lover: “Maybe-boyfriend had agility, mobility, playfulness” (*M* 29); he is most attractive “when he was engrossed, unstudied, unself-conscious, working on the old heaps, his face full of love and concentration” (*M* 17). In sharp contrast to the conniving “Milkman”, he is “uncalculated”. So is his best friend: “no tantrums, just meditation, absorption, relaxation. This was playfulness in the company of his very own appreciative person” (*M* 36). Real Milkman, too, spots the positive elements, when he praises the protagonist’s “wee sisters”: “Such bright little girls, such wonderful curiosity and guts and passion and engagement” (*M* 147).

In *The Fire Starters* the *eros* forces come mainly via the “siren” who begets Jonathan’s baby and, after having delivered, leaves his house. Their daughter transforms him. “He has always believed himself to be half a person: the poor product of bad parenting and upper-class neglect” (*FS* 250), raised “lonely with a television set in every room” (*FS* 30), but now Sophie shows him his self is richer, more colourful and adventurous than he thought: “He has opinions, tastes, likes and dislikes, which refuse to sit quietly below the surface of his reserve” (*FS* 153-4). Yet he is afraid that, being half siren, she might do harm later, and wonders: “I have fifty per cent shares in this child. I suspect it is caught in some sort of pre-natal wrestling match, a junior Jacob oscillating between the human and the divine” (*FS* 66). Another horizon-widening factor is that his worry about Sophie brings him in contact with “the Unfortunate Children”, a name which says more about the negatives forces which steer this society. Actually they are children with very special gifts which means it will take them extra time before they will “sit easily in their own odd skins” (*FS* 190). In the course of time Jonathan will learn that it is not up to him to decide on Sophie’s life, as is the custom in the area; he will let her do her own post-natal wrestling match, and let her settle in “her own odd skin” in her own good time.

Vital features of (Belfast) languages: Kinds of languages

People communicate in at least six languages: the body (such as facial expressions, tears, sweat), gestures (friendly or threatening, encouraging

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or impatient), clothes (formal or not, trendy or staid, feminine or masculine), spaces (the way one's home is organised), images (mental, physical or digital, photos, icons), and words. As Lacan indicated, these "languages" are one's most individual, most vital filters which connect the energies of the speaker's present with their past and so pronounce a future and form a personality.

That this energy is negative in Sammy Agnew's Eastern part of town is visible in all communication, whether bodily, gestural, sartorial, spatial, iconic or verbal. Anger is anchored in many youthful bodies, as when "teenagers … will be lobbing things at the firemen and paramedics. They won't be sure why they're doing this but will feel the itch of necessity in their elbow joints" (*FS* 22). The self-destructive streak sits in Sammy's gestures: he "opens the front door of his house, steps over the Welcome mat and tramps black fire tar all over the good carpet. There is nothing he can do to lift the stain" (*FS* 48). The spatial language of Mark Agnew, Sammy's son, who is said to be the brain behind the Fire Starters, is significant too. He lives in a curiously empty cell, "no posters on the walls, no photographs, nothing to mark ownership of the place. It might as well be a prison cell" (*FS* 176). His one-line youtube message is as empty as his room: "'LEAVE OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES ALONE.' This is the sole demand of the person orchestrating all the Tall Fires" (*FS* 21). The message is picked up by mono-minded followers: "Them bastards are trying to restrict our civil liberties" (*FS* 118); they never articulate who "them" are, which liberties they demand and how civil these are. As to the sartorial aspect, this stood out in both novels in that either group of paramilitaries opposes uniformed authority. The youngsters who attack medics or military, police or postmen do not discriminate between repressive and healing forces; they do not pay attention to any functionality. Steered by the antiproductive tendency of the death drive they merely object to unified (institutional) bodies.

The four negatives of lethal language

We saw that the death drive produces negativity in all aspects, but here we want to see how that works itself out in verbal communication. We distinguish four features: repetitiveness, inarticulateness, induction of confusion, a culture of threat.

First, there is the issue or repetition. Carson's characters repeatedly complain about the omnipresence of stereotype language: "Their mouths are full of platitudes" (*FS* 206). In his GP's surgery Jonathan wonders "Why these people talk the way they do, in cheap slang and clichés,

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phrases they've lifted from the television" (*FS* 238). Burns highlights the doggedness with which the students in French class refuse to perceive anything else but stereotype things. Though the teacher makes them see the brilliant sunset over Belfast outside the window (on the cover of the early Faber & Faber edition) the students persevere '*le ciel est bleu! Le ciel est bleu!*' (*M* 69). "It would have taken an enormous explosion of conscious effort to shift that particular bit of hearsay on to the truth" (*M* 141). Second, Carson points at the inarticulateness which belongs to the rituals of "Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth" Night (*FS* 122): "'yeooo' is a small word – not so much a word as a guttural yelp – which speaks of … three whole days of wild hedonism" (*FS* 124). Burns puts her finger on this even more clearly: after having shown how shame oppresses the "community" the protagonist observes that "′sorry', like 'shame', nobody yet knew here how to say" (*M* 53). The vital emotions must remain unsaid. Third, Burns highlights how the "rumour-mongers" are themselves "elusive" (*M* 198) while confusing the people in their "intricately coiled, overly secretive, hyper-gossipy, puritanical yet indecent, totalitarian district" (*M* 172). Fourth, the paramilitaries' power is wielded through inferred threat: "Fearful fantasies ... were predicting maybe-boyfriend's violent death […] underlined by this milkman in the subsoil of our conversation". (*M* 115). The protagonist's mother, too, internalises this "culture" of threat: "Ma […] did horror stories on herself" (*M* 46), thus illustrating the "claustrophobic and uncanny reality" of the death drive (Moyaert 105).

All four "ingredients" of the death drive in verbal communication lead to one attitude: that of either non- or blind commitment. Burns' protagonist recognises this refusal to commit in the paramilitaries' gestural language: "This staring into the middle distance […] was identical to that of Milkman. Was this some 'profile display stance' then…?" (*M* 199).

The four positives of enabling communication

Against the former negatives these two novels' protagonists show that the demonic forces can be replaced by nuance, precision, humour and respect, and empathy.

Indeed Carson's women use nuance to get out of the rut of stereotype. Instead of focusing on the colours the men paint on the kerb stones ("People think the East is red, white and blue") the women know "The colour of the East is grey, forty shades" (*FS* 13). Gender stereotype is of course also a source of humour: Jonathan, who has been rather feminine, must now stress his maleness and so orders pizza; while Burns' favourite men are gay and love cooking. Burns' precision is often permeated with

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humour, as when the protagonist describes how paramilitaries had "monies garnered – illegally, very illegally and most spectacularly illegally" (*M* 121). Carson's ex-paramilitary hero also dares to be precise about himself. Sammy looks back and fully recognises the violence he inflicted; as a result "I feel like I'm a stranger" but will live with it, as "I want everything to move forwards" (*FS* 104).

But the most beautiful thing which connects Sammy and Jonathan is that, instead of projecting badness to the other in a closed, dual relation, they open up their view to a third Other which they have in common with their children. And instead of lashing out to another person they stand in respect for an Other dimension, an unknown factor in one's own child. Here, the demonic tips into the divine, threat into trust. Both Sammy who looks at his adult son and Jonathan who contemplates his baby daughter come to see parenthood as being responsible without owning. They understand that the world is not a matter of "good self" and "bad other", but that every person has to come to terms with his own potentialities in these matters. Jonathan acknowledges that, on the one hand "[w]hen I say the word 'daughter' there's a kind of shyness in my voice, like the way a religious person sounds when saying 'God'" (*FS* 272); on the other, he thinks "Sophie … belongs with the dark beasts – the devils and vampires and soulless haunting things – who cannot keep both feet in the underworld" (*FS* 191). Likewise, Sammy, after having beaten up his son, is holding him like in a *pieta*, except here the son is far from ideal: "He knows him, surface skin to devil core" (*FS* 269), and Sammy is, if anything, like God the Father, only the suffering aspect of the image: "For this is what it is to be a father and he cannot give back the privilege" (*FS* 270).

In *Milkman* it is again the very young who steal the show. The protagonist's little sisters are reading English newspapers because they want to "*Try… to understand their viewpoint!"* while the elder siblings worry whether "ages six, seven and eight might not be considered too young by the paramilitaries to punish in the usual manner" (*M* 150). Here, the healthy curiosity and need for empathy of very young children contrasts with the constrictive rules of the paramilitary not to venture beyond their own Belfast pocket of idiosyncratic rule.

Both novels end on an upbeat note, on the magic of empathy and the glorious effects of love.

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Conclusion

It seems that literature, even when it talks about violence, is an antidote against it, as it questions power, opens up what was closed, endorses that which enlarges the perspective. This is very much the case with *Milkman* and *The Fire Starters*, two novels which offer, first of all, precise analyses of the past and suggest ways forward for a politics of empathy and responsibility, of common democratic rule, of authority based on solidarity. As Jan Carson puts it: "Empathy […] is a life saver."[8] Second, in their surprising precision both novels have a strong undercurrent of humour, which allows them to keep a refreshing distance from the actual events – as when Jonathan, used to plucking "a tissue from the box" whenever a patient starts to look really worried, forgets he is handing this to an ex-paramilitary who "stares [...] as if the doctor has placed a steaming lump of dog shit in his hand" (*FS* 152). A third aspect these two have in common is the magic realism, which connects both with old Irish myths and with a wide open future full of possibilities. And fourth, there is the variety of sensations, images and turns of phrase which show that Northern Irish writing is deeply renewing itself. As Lucy Caldwell said in her introduction to the anthology of Irish short stories, *Being Various*: "I hope that most of all it is a celebration – in the words of Louis MacNeice, words which are the closest I have to an article of faith – of 'the drunkenness of things being various'".

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PART FOUR:

THE BORDER IN MUSIC AND FILM

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Transgressing Musical Borders: Re(m)betika as Liminal Music

Gail Holst-Warhaft

Around 1304 BCE a ship sank off the coast of Turkey near the modern town of Uluburun. In its hold were goods from all around the Mediterranean: seals from Mycenae, copper ingots from Cyprus, logs of Egyptian ebony, ivory and gold from Africa, weights from Syria. Equally diverse was the crew, identified by each sailor's few possessions.[1] Recruited, perhaps, in Cyprus, they were from half a dozen different countries. The ship, unusually well preserved by the particular mud of the coastal shelf, provides strong evidence of the international nature of trade in the region during the Bronze Age. We are left to imagine what else was exchanged on board and at the harbours where boats stopped to unload goods or take on new merchandise.

Harbours have always been places of exchange, in-between spaces where goods, bodies, and music are exchanged. Everything from music to bodies to viruses must have been shared by sailors in the two establishments that dominated the waterfront over the centuries: the bar and the brothel. The modern Greek word *λιμάνι* comes from classical Greek *λίμήν* meaning a harbour, refuge or womb, and is cognate with Turkish *liman*. It is tempting to conflate this concept of a harbour with the Latin *limen*, meaning a threshold, a place of beginning and ending a journey (or even the house itself as the *locus* of that beginning and ending). Both the Greek and the Latin give us a sense of frontiers and the security they can offer. Anthropologists are familiar with the concept of *liminality* through Van Gennep's coining of the term to refer to transitional states characteristic of rites of passage, and it is therefore difficult not to link the physical space of a harbour with the concept of liminal, or in-between spaces that mark borders and transitions.[2] In the context of the

[1] See Christopher Monroe's fascinating paper "Sunk Costs at Late Bronze Age Uluburun."

[2] Van Gennep, Arnold, *Les rites de passage.*

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Mediterranean, liminality has unavoidably material associations. Not only is the harbour an in-between place of negotiation, of half-belonging, it is a border, or a series of borders where national boundaries are enforced and papers controlled. For a country like Greece whose eastern border is laced with islands, it is inevitably porous.

Take the island of Kalymnos, famous for its sponges. When I visited the island in the 1970s I found that after the sponge divers returned from their harsh life aboard sponge-boats, and had spent six months' wages in a flourish of gambling and dancing, they joined local fishermen in their age-old trade of smuggling, exchanging goods with Turkish fishermen in the middle of the narrow strait that divided the island from the mainland. The Greeks had two things the Turks wanted: wine and olives. In exchange they supplied the Greeks with hashish and hazel nuts. Different exchanges took place on other islands, and between islands and the Turkish mainland. Music was one of them. Larger Greek harbours became stopping-off places for trade between Smyrna and Piraeus. The fertile island of Lesvos, with its chief port of Mytilini, and Syros, with Ermoupoli as a major trading hub, became two of the great musical crossroads of the Aegean. Lesvos was a stopping-off place on the route from Constantinople to Crete. During the Ottoman period, when western Europeans began to trade with the city of Smyrna on the coast, the island exported olive oil and its merchants developed an expertise in negotiating complex Ottoman tax laws and assisting foreign companies to negotiate them. The islanders also developed expertise in boat-building, and a class of wealthy merchants began building large stone mansions in Mytilini. Prosperity on the island led to a desire to emulate the more sophisticated cities of Smyrna and Constantinople. By the first two decades of the twentieth century, this featured western classical music, including opera and operetta. At the same time local musicians and their less sophisticated audience continued to enjoy local folk music and popular music from the opposite coast. That included music that would later be called *café aman* style and songs that could be classified as *rebetika*. Drawing a line between them is not easy. Local musicians on Lesvos used neither of these terms but described the growing demand for repertoire "alla turca".[3] An informant from the town of Ayiassos told Khtouris in 1996 "Whatever was sung in Dikeli, in Bursa, in Smyrna, with the coming and going before the Asia Minor disaster, was here right away." Another informant from Plomari added: "Musicians from here went and worked there (on the

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[3] Χτούρης, Σωτήρης, Μουσικά σταυροδρόμια στο Αιγαίο: Λέσβος (19ος – 20ος αιώνας). (Khtouris, Sotiris, "Musical Crossroads of the Aegean: Lesbos (19th – 20th centuries)".

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Turkish coast) and they took [the tunes] alla turca and we played them alla turca […] now here if you play and you can't play a zeibekiko, a heavy zeibekiko, a karsilamas – if you don't know those, you can't be a successful musician" (2000:70).

Like the musical life of Smyrna, of which we have many contemporary descriptions, early twentieth-century Lesvos must have been full of music of all sorts.[4] In his liner notes (in English and Greek) to the excellent set of CDs *Lesbos Aiolos: Songs and Dances of the Aegean* (1996), Nikos Dionysopoulos asserts that, in the first two decades of the twentieth century at least, "the island functioned along general lines as an urban space (in the artistic sense), with aesthetic and social models equivalent to those of Smyrna, Constantinople and Ayvalik" (1997: 25). The karsilamas and the various local forms of zeibekiko (both in 9/8) were also danced in most parts of the island, both of which were very different from the zeibekiko associated with the rembetika repertoire. [5]

The Asia Minor disaster and the exodus of refugees, many of whom fled first to the adjacent islands off the coast, had a devastating effect on Lesvos. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, as many as a quarter of a million refugees landed on the island, filling every habitable space to overflowing. The Turkish music that had seemed attractively sophisticated was now attached to a mass of homeless, traumatised refugees with their only possessions tied in bundles. No longer did local musicians try to imitate Turkish music. Dionysopoulos describes the reversal in local attitudes to the refugees:

> While previously the mainland had been viewed as more economically, socially, and culturally advanced, the boot was now on the other foot. The people the islands had admired – as being better merchants than them, as having better schools, as playing music better, etc. – were suddenly transformed into social pariahs. The refugees experienced this attitude of scorn in the reception they received on the island, and also in the practical aspects of their rehabilitation. (1996:25-26)

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[4] Most of the accounts of the musical life of Smyrna are in Greek or French. Aristomenis Kalyviotis's *Σμύρνα, η μουσική ζωή 1900-1922* (*Smyrna: Musical Life 1900-1922*) is accompanied by a CD and contains illustrations of musical ensembles of all sorts. It describes the city's rich musical life remarked on by travellers who passed through and documented by a large number of recordings made in Constantinople and Athens.

[5] Zoi Margari wrote the notes about dance in Dionysopoulos's CD booklet (op. cit.), pp. 58-62.

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Musically, this change of attitude towards the mainlanders was translated into distaste for the very music they had once admired:

> In such an atmosphere the misfortunes of the refugees seem to have been equated with the cultural features of the East (musical or otherwise) which they brought with them. The refugees from Asia Minor thus retained selectively such elements as referred directly or indirectly to the West.[6]

The sudden change of attitude towards Turkish-style music following the influx of refugees from Asia Minor into the island of Lesvos did not follow exactly the same path in Athens. Mytilini, separated by a narrow strait from the mainland, looked to the east for its musical models. Before the catastrophic sacking of the city, Smyrna had been a cosmopolitan centre with a rich musical life. Athens' musical life, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, was strongly influenced by western European models, including Italian operettas and melodramas.[7] Another major influence on Athenian popular music was also Italian but had been adopted much earlier in the islands at the western border of Greece. There was a tradition of καντάδες (kantádhes), or serenades popular in the Ionian Islands which had become part of the new nation in 1864. Sung in harmony by a group of men and women as they dined or drank at tables together, the kantádhes were inspired by the tradition of Neapolitan popular song, but soon developed a local flavour. They became the model for Athenian serenades that were tremendously popular in the 1910s and 1920s. The division between the new bourgeoisie of Athens, whose desire was to make Athens a thoroughly European city and those who were attracted to music that was played in cafés frequented by enthusiasts of the pan-Ottoman tradition of modal music was no minor question of taste. It became central to the question of Greek identity itself. Although there was some overlap, the two establishments, one favouring "oriental" music, and one European, were called the *café aman* and the *café chantant*. Already, in the 1870s the western-style cafés occupied one bank of the Illisos River, the *cafés aman* the other.[8]

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[6] Dionysopoulos, op. cit., p. 26.

[7] Kostas Mylonas is one of the few Greeks to have documented the development of popular song in Greece before 1930. In his *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού τραγουδιού* (*History of Greek Song*), he notes the cultural insecurity of the early urban Greeks, and their desire to adopt whatever was European. (1984:18).

[8] *Ta Nea* https://www.tanea.gr/2010/02/09/lifearts/culture/o-ethnikos-dixasmos-metaksy-tagko-kai-bambakari/

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The repertoire of *cafés aman* that proliferated in the quarters of Aghia Triada, Iera Odos, Yerani and Plateia Elefteria was largely *amanédes* – improvised vocal solos of the type popular in Constantinople and Smyrna and performed mostly by Turkish or Armenian singers. They were accompanied by male musicians who shared in the improvisation. A significant number of the customers were, it seems, church cantors who wanted to learn the technique of improvisation in a variety of Ottoman modes.[9] Most middle and upper class Greeks, who aspired to a European lifestyle, saw the amanédes as an oriental phenomenon, tying the music to an Ottoman past they would prefer to forget. In a poem published in 1907, Kostis Palamas expressed what was undoubtedly a view of many bourgeois Athenians to the music, one which combines disavowal with nostalgia, in a poem called "Orient", published in 1907:

Songs of Yiannina, Smyrna, Constantinople,
long-drawn-out eastern songs,
pitiful.
How my heart is drawn along with you!
Moulded by your music
it flies on your wings.

Palamas ascribes the songs to a wanton, perfumed mother whose spirit is "flesh in the harem", but he is unable to distance himself from it:

In you the black downtrodden
and all of you, even your joy, a lament,
bitter and slow,
black, poor, enslaved, and idle,

narrow-hearted, crude, I am
a wayfarer with you. [10]

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[9] Some of this information is based on an article written by Dimitris Kyriadzis and published on the site of *Lifo* #646, 31/5/2017).

[10] Palamas, Kostis, *Άπαντα*, Complete Works, vol. 5, pp. 217-218. My translation. Stathis Gauntlett (2003: 248-9) interprets the poem as a condemnation of the oriental, a position that he emphasises in his translation of the poem, describing the long-drawn-out songs as "drawling" and omitting the sweetness implied in the word μοσχοβολάει. The poet may disapprove of many oriental qualities, and equate the east with a lascivious "mother" figure, but Palamas does not separate himself from the sad songs of the Orient. He is "drawn along" with them. The sad lament of the downtrodden is his lament too, just as it will be for Kazantzakis.

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Palamas wrote his poem before the influx of refugees from Asia Minor. He must have been familiar with them through the *cafés aman* and the fact that they were performed by Greek musicians not only in Athens but in the Greek countryside.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the *cafés aman* were mostly closed, but they would be revived by the refugees in the 1920s. The amanédes that were performed in the *cafés aman* were often identical to the *gazeller*, improvisations based on a quatrain of *gazel* poetry. Greek performers began to put Greek words to these quatrains, and after the expulsion of Greeks from Turkey in 1922, they were mostly tragic. But despite the fact that early singers of rebetika music recorded amanédes, these songs had little in common with the rebetika except for their melodic basis in an Ottoman modal system.

The division between musical establishments that looked westward and those that looked eastward, and between their clientele, would persist through the first decades of the twentieth century and mark discussions of popular urban music for more than half a century. If there were infinite space in this chapter, it would be worth re-opening the discussion of the Helleno-Romiosini divide in Greek society, and how music reflects this schism.[11] It may be enough to say that the dualism in Greek society noticed by anthropologists, novelists and other observers extends to almost every aspect of Greek life. The divide between the eastern and western sides of the Greek character is related to class and education but it is never fixed and may be breached at unexpected moments. In his 1937 travelogue entitled *Journey to the Morea*, Nikos Kazantzakis describes the dichotomy in terms that echo Palamas, despite being more sympathetic to the "oriental" side:

> In the taverns, at festivals, on holidays when they have drunk a little, the small businessmen and infantry officers [of the Peloponnese], so logical and selfish, break into melancholy eastern amanedhes, into a sudden longing: they reveal a psyche quite different from their sober everyday one. A great treasure, a deep longing…
>
> What has the dual-descended modern Greek taken from his father, what from his mother […] he is clever and shallow with no metaphysical anxieties, and yet, when he begins to sings, a universal bitterness leaps up from his oriental bowels, breaks through the crust of Greek logic and,

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[11] The first writer to discuss the phenomenon was Patrick Leigh Fermor in *Roumeli* (1966: 107-113). Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld analysed it more fully in *Anthropology through the Looking-Glass*: *Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (1987: 95-122).

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> from the depths of his being, totally mysterious and dark, the orient emerges.[12]

In Kazantzakis's rather florid description, the eastern strain in modern Greeks is the better side of their psyche, inherited from the maternal line. Mysterious, dark, and feminine, it is also a "great treasure". At the time he wrote his travelogue, arguments about Greek language were raging in the literary world between those who argued that Greek should be purged of its borrowings from other languages, especially Turkish, to a form of Greek as close to possible to the Attic Greek of antiquity, and those, like Kazantzakis, who thought the language spoken by ordinary people should be used for literature and education. Those Greeks who admired rebetika and those who despised it were similarly centered on questions of Greekness, and whether the music and lyrics of the songs reflected an "oriental" tradition or a European one.

Lesvos and the islands off the Asia Minor coast were the obvious places for many refugees to head for in the aftermath of the burning of Smyrna in 1922, but with the exchange of populations that followed, stipulating that all Christians be resettled in Greece and all Muslims return to Turkey, there was no way the enormous numbers of refugees could stay on islands.[13] There was no way that the new nation could absorb so many people into the workforce and many drifted into the underworld of Piraeus where they mixed with the poor Greeks who found work wherever they could. Like Mytilini, Piraeus was a harbour town, a place on the margin of the new Greek nation. Refugees crowded into the port, living in tents, or in abandoned railway carriages. Markos Vamvakaris, regarded by many as the father of rebetika, saw the misery of the refugees and was ashamed:

> What those people went through can't be described. Aside from what they'd suffered at the hands of the Turks who drove them out. And here, the same thing. They tried, they did their darndest, whatever they could until they found a house to live in…And the locals didn't look on them with kind eyes; instead they cursed them. A thousand times. Get out of here, you, go away. They didn't have enough love to say, hey, wait a minute, aren't they our relatives, real Greeks? To embrace them. This didn't happen, I can tell you, because I saw it. Maybe in other places. They wanted to steal from them, the thieves that live around here. To fool them. Criminals! (1978:95)

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[12] Included in the volume published in Greek as *Ταξιδεύοντας: Ιταλία, Αιγυπτος, Σίνα, Ιερούσαλημ, Κύπρος, ο Μοριας.* 1961: My translation.

[13] More than a million Christian refugees left Turkey in the 1920s. Greece had a population of roughly 4.5 million before 1920.

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Vamvakaris was not only sympathetic to the refugees; he recognised that the musicians among them were able to teach the local Greek musicians a variety of new musical styles:

> Before they came, our musicians played hardly anything except folk music. Sometimes a mané (amané). But when [the refugees] came, the *tsiftetelia*, *syrta*, lots of things. *Manedes*, *tzivaeria, aivaliotika*, lots more, Not so much laïka… laïka we called them when they were my songs. (1978:96)

According to the refugee singer Angheliki Maroniti-Papazoglou, who came to Piraeus with her husband, the rebetika singer and song-writer Vangelis Papazoglou, amanédes were very popular among the Greeks of Smyrna before the exchange of populations. An exceptional singer, who had performed in cafés in Smyrna since she was eleven years old, Maroniti looked back on her early career, saying:

> However much we sang, we never got tired of the *minorés.*[14] Everyone ordered them and everyone listened to them with delight, because [in them] we expressed our pain about being enslaved under Turkish rule. With the minoré we didn't forget. We wanted to remember, to light a candle inside us, a warm hope…
>
> *Only for an hour am I happy, when the sun sweetly rises*
> *and the heart takes a rest and stops sighing.*
> *When the crow turns white and the snow black,*
> *then this fire will be quelled in my breast…*
>
> And we meant, by that, our slavery.[15]

Maroniti's account of the popularities of such amanédes undermines a common view expressed by visitors to the city of Smyrna, that the city was a cosmopolitan melting-pot where Greeks, who outnumbered Turks in the city, enjoyed equal status. Even if the large Orthodox Christian population lived in relative freedom and prosperity, they were aware of the fragility of their situation and expressed it in their amanédes. A sampling of amanédes "in Smyrna style" recorded before and after the fall of the city, corroborates Maroniti's view of the genre as a way to express the

[14] The *minoré* did not denote a European minor scale, but a mode popular in *amanedes.*

[15] Quoted in Panayiotis Kounadis's article «Το Σμυρνεικο μινόρε: οι αμανέδες της Σμύρνης».

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sorrow of the Greeks.

In the years following the exchange of populations, refugee musicians, musically better educated and resourceful than their Greek contemporaries, came to dominate the musical scene of Athens. Two of them, Panayiotis Toundas and Spyros Peristeris, became directors of the first recording studios in the city (Odeon and Columbia) and employed many of their fellow artists from Smyrna to record for them. One of the most impressive of the Smyrna refugee musicians was the singer Rita Abadzi, whose father disappeared during the sack of the city. She would become well-known as a performer of rebetika songs, but she continued to sing melancholy amanédes like the one described as "Gazeli neva sabah":

> *A man must think, at the hour of his death*
> *That he will enter the black earth and his name will disappear.*"[16]

On this splendid recording of an amané, performed by one of the greatest of the refugee singers, we hear her backed by two of the best instrumentalists of their day, Dimitrios Semsis, a violinist born in Salonika, who performed in Constantinople before coming to Greece as a refugee, and Lambros Savaidis on *kanonaki,* as the Greeks called the zither-like Middle-eastern *kanun*. Musicians like Abadzi had a wide repertoire of songs, from amanédes to island songs, to rebetika. Her chief rival was the Salonika-born Jew, Rosa Eskenazi, an equally gifted singer who owed her career largely to the encouragement of Panayiotis Toundas.

The audience for the music refugee musicians produced and recorded was mostly lower class. The refugees themselves had arrived with nothing and they mingled with local musicians and the working-class inhabitants of Piraeus. Like the port of Mytilini, Piraeus was a liminal space where the refugees met less hostility than they did in wealthier neighbourhoods and where musicians mingled with one another sharing musical ideas. Many of them also joined locals in establishments known as *tekedes* where they smoked hashish.

Massive social displacement, the mixture of "oriental" and local Greek musical elements, hashish-smoking, poverty, the slang and style of the local criminal underworld – all these factors contributed to the development of a style of music that we call rebetika, more precisely, the Piraeus style rebetika. The rebetika are not unique in being a hybrid

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[16] A reissue of the recording can be heard on the CD compiled by Martin Schwartz "Greek-Oriental Rebetika: Songs and Dances of Asia Minor. The Golden Years:1911-1937" (Arhoolie, Folklyric CD 7005). A youtube version also exists: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6i07rrnJyY

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musical form. Like most forms that can be loosely described as "urban blues", they grew out of the migration of rural or non-local populations into a poor urban setting. And like rai, flamenco, fado, and tango the rebetika were regarded as low class and disreputable. The musical cross-fertilisation or hybridisation that creates such styles is only possible when people are forced into close proximity and share a common experience of social marginalisation.[17] For the Smyrna refugees and their Piraeus neighbours, musical interaction was inevitable. Hashish-smoking, a habit more common in Turkey than Greece but popular among sailors and Aegean islanders, in the underworld, and in prisons, encouraged a loosening of barriers, a way to escape the burden of poverty and nostalgia. Many of the earliest rebetika songs are about the pleasures of sharing a narghile or water-pipe. Often the habit of smoking hashish is directly linked to the pain of the protagonist's life:

The Voice of the Narghile (Hookah)

Five years I got in Yendi-koule prison
and from all the pain, I turned on to the narghíle
Blow it, suck it, tamp it, and light up.
Keep an eye out for those dummies, the guards.

And another five forgotten by you,
the only comfort the tough guys who smoke the narghíle
Blow it, suck it, tamp it and light up
Keep an eye out for those dummies, the guards.

Now I've got out of Yendi Koule
fill up our narghile and let's smoke my friend.
Blow it, suck it, tamp it, and light up.
Keep an eye out for the bum, here come two cops.

The song is by Vangelis Papazoglou, whose wife, Angheliki not only recorded amanédhes, but may have written the lyrics for this song of low life. The song is not autobiographical – we know that Papazoglou served no time in Yendi Koule – so it must have catered to a taste for

[17] There is a growing literature on the hybridisation of musical forms. See, *inter alia*, Steingress, G. "Social Theory and the Comparative History of Flamenco, Tango, and Rebetika", in William Washabaugh, *The Passion of Music and Dance,* pp. 151-171; Holst-Warhaft, G., "The Tame Sow and the Wild Boar: Hybridization and the Rebetika" in G. Steingress (ed.), *Songs of the Minotaur: Hybridity and Popular Music in the Era of Globalization*; Holst-Warhaft, G. "Reorienting the Rebetika".

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songs about drugs and low life. A number of such songs were recorded by the Asia Minor refugees like Panayiotis Toundas and Spyros Peristeris or by women singers they employed, like Rosa Eskenazi. Two songs she recorded in the 1930s, "Why I smoke Cocaine", composed by Toundas and "Ouzo, Morphine, and Hashish" by Peristeris were clearly intended to present a colourful, if shocking, picture of life in the underworld of Piraeus, but the songs displayed some sympathy with the lot of the prisoner or drug-taker who has fallen on hard times and looks to hashish or cocaine to dull his or her pain. It would take another kind of song-writer to change the songs about the underworld of Piraeus from an exoticising conceit to a home-grown form of urban blues. That was a man who had observed the suffering of the refugees from Smyrna and realised that he had much to learn from them: Markos Vamvakaris.

Nothing could illustrate the hybrid nature of the rebetika more clearly than the music of Markos Vamvakaris. A bouzouki-player born in 1905, who was himself an economic refugee from the island of Syros, and who wrote songs about his own life and the harsh life of Piraeus, Vamvakaris teamed up in 1934 with two refugee musicians, Anestis Delias and Stratos Payioumdzis, and a local musician, Yorgos Batis, to form a quartet. The origins, musical training, even the ages of these musicians could hardly have been more different. Batis was almost fifty years old. Stratos, born in Aivali, was around thirty. Delias, born in Smyrna, was only twenty-two. Markos himself was twenty-nine. It was he who persuaded the others to formed a group that they call the *τετρας ξακουστή του Πειραιώς* ("The Fabulous Four of Piraeus"). With bouzoukis, guitar and voice they began performing their original songs, most of them by Vamvakaris, in the courtyard of a tavern near Drapetsona. Stratos was a gifted singer. Delias was the son of a well-known Smyrna santouri-player and knew how to read music. He switched from guitar to bouzouki at Vamvakaris's suggestion. Batis played baglama, and made up for any lack of skill as an instrumentalist by writing amusing songs and entertaining both his fellow musicians and the audience.

Until the quartet began performing together, the bouzouki was not a popular instrument. It was not played by the refugees, nor by most Greek musicians. What made Vamvakaris decide the public was ready for a bouzouki band made up of local and Asia Minor musicians? What made the musically more sophisticated Stratos and Delias join him? Why were Markos's largely autobiographical songs about life in Piraeus so popular? Whatever the reason, the group created a musical revolution. Athenians began flocking to Piraeus to hear the new bouzouki music.

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The lines drawn between east and west, refugees and locals, *café aman* and *café chantant* were suddenly irrelevant. The music the group played was indubitably Greek, but it was hard to place it in any pre-existing category. It was certainly low class. The milieu it described was poor, sometimes shady, (a number of the songs were about smoking hashish) and largely male. The streets were dominated by tough men known as *manghes*, many of whom belonged to the criminal underworld. Women might sing songs with dubious lyrics, but they did so from a distance. The women Vamvakaris mentions in his songs are girlfriends, heart-breakers, hashish-smokers. They are far from exotic. They are the women he came in contact with in his tough life selling coal and working in the slaughter-house in Piraeus. Vamvakaris's songs are filled with humour, swagger, and sometimes bitterness. Nobody could describe them as melancholy.

Vamvakaris never thought of himself as a singer and was surprised when he was asked by a studio director to sing one of his own songs that dealt with smoking hashish. The director recognised his gravelly, untrained voice as being ideally suited to performing such songs of low-life, and asked him for more.[18] One of Markos's best-known hashish-smoking songs is "Κάν' τονε Σταύρο, κάν' τονε (Fix it, Stavros, Fix it):

Fix it, Stavros, fix it,
light it up and burn it.

Pass it to crazy Yorgos,
so the carpenter gets high.

Take a toke, you cab-driver
who keeps a dandy hash-den.

Pass it to our friend Nick;
so he can take our sorrow away.

And let our Batis take a puff.
who's just a skirt-chasing bum.[19]

It's impossible not to smile at this song. Markos and his companions are sharing a narghilé in a hashish den in Piraeus. The only one of the

[18] He describes the incident in amusing detail in his autobiography, ghost-written by Angheliki Keil (1978, 158-159).
[19] First recorded by Markos in 1935. The original is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clVAv2nf7i0

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quartet mentioned is Batis; the others are referred to by their trades. It's a song for the "in" group of *manghes* who smoke dope together in a tough neighbourhood, and yet it is being marketed by a recording company. Who listens to such songs? Certainly a broader public than the aficionados of the hashish-den. And why did the songs become so popular?

Two years after he recorded "Fix it, Stavros", Markos had become a well-known figure in Piraeus. In a song recorded in 1937, he boasts of his own success in the milieu of the manghes, now called the *rebetes* of Piraeus:

All the rebetes in the world
love me;
as soon as they meet me
they make sacrifices for me.

And those who didn't know me
will surely know me now.
I'll take a stroll in the streets
and let them make fun of me.

I was born poor,
I've been all around.
Deep in my heart
I've suffered too.

All the young dudes
who live in the hood,
they too, in their hearts,
have plenty of pain.[20]

As Markos says, the rebetes, or manghes may have enjoyed the pleasures of smoking dope, chasing women, dancing, and playing music, but underneath the fun and swagger, they endured poverty and hardship. The tragic figure of Vamvakaris's quartet was Smyrna-born Anestis Delias, known by the nickname Artemis. He was the only one of the group to become addicted to hard drugs and he wrote a song in 1924 called "The Drug Addict's Complaint", foreshadowing his own death, twenty years later, on the street.

From the time I started smoking the dose
the world turned its back on me; I don't know what to do.

[20] 1937. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K5D_lVMYDE

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Wherever I stand, wherever I find myself people bother me
and my soul can't bear people calling me an addict.

From sniffing it up I went onto the needle
and my body slowly began to dissolve.

Nothing was left for me to do in this world
because the drugs led me to die in the street.[21]

Despite a number of sad songs about addiction, poverty, and prison, the majority of Piraeus rebetika songs by Markos and his friends were not gloomy. Like "All the Rebetes in the World", the songs are the product of a particular society. Borders are drawn between the "in" group of the rebetes, or manghes, and the outsiders, but rebetes are no longer between East and West, oriental and European. Refugees fit into this society as musicians, usually aficionados of the *teke* or hashish den. An important criterion for membership in this sub-culture was authenticity. In the tough world where they lived, a faker could be spotted a mile away and was despised. Delias expressed it well in a song called "Young Bum" or "Faker". The song goes:

Hey mangas, if you're going
to use your knife,
you'd better have the guts,
you faker, to pull it out.

That stuff doesn't wash with me
so hide your blade
because I'll get high,
faker, and I'll track you down.

Go somewhere else, faker,
and strut your stuff
because I've been smoking,
faker, and I've got a crazy high.

I told you to sit and behave
because I'll beat you up.
I'll come with my gat,
faker, and I'll straighten you out.[22]

[21] Recording made in 1934. He died in the street of an overdose in 1944. The original recording is available on Youtube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qXm4RigEgI.
[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEnCvzL4IWc

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As the craze for bouzouki-base rebetiko music grew, Vamvakaris and his musicians began performing in Athens; songs about drugs and the underworld were less common, but the associations remained. During the Metaxas dictatorship that preceded World War II, censorship was imposed, hashish dens destroyed, and bouzouki players persecuted, imprisoned and driven into exile on Aegean islands. But when war came and the Germans occupied Greece, the rebetika had already established themselves as Greek, rather than Asia Minor, music, and their lyrics about the problems of the *kosmaki*, the poor and neglected citizens of Greece, assumed a new importance in Athens. While the Germans played cheerful Greek waltzes and tangoes over their loudspeakers as they drove around the suburbs in the mornings, the Athenians turned to the rebetika as an expression of their sorrows. As the novelist Kostas Tachtsis wrote in a 1964 essay:

> There were no more hungry and satisfied, there were no masters and slaves; everyone was a slave, everyone was hungry, all felt the need to bewail their fate […] all the houses suddenly became hashish dens, not literally, of course, but in character. The zeibekiko found room to develop rapidly. Suddenly, it was no longer a dance of the underworld, but of a large number of Greeks, mostly those living in urban centers. Many of the songs that were first heard immediately following the war, had been written during the Occupation, and differed markedly from the pre-war, heavier 'hashish' rebetika.[23]

Tachtsis thought the rebetika offered the Greeks songs that dealt with the reality of the misery around them. While the armed, communist-led resistance in the mountains sang songs based on Russian and other foreign models, the hungry, suffering population of the Greek cities, all sympathetic with the resistance if not actively engaged in it, turned to songs that spoke of what Tachtsis calls "the eternal poison of life" (1977: 205).

Perhaps it took the German occupation of the country to transform the rebetika into a thoroughly Greek form of popular music. Arguments about the Greekness or otherwise of the music would flair up in the post-war period, but with the encouragement of Manos Hatzidakis and Mikis Theodorakis, both of whom championed the music of Vamvakaris and his friends, and began composing neo-rebetika songs in the late 1950s and 1960s, the Piraeus hybrid that grew out of the music of Smyrna refugees and local Greek elements had become synonymous with popular music in

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[23] The full text of Tachtsis's essay, originally published in *Pali,* 1964-1-2, is reproduced (in Greek) in G. Holst, *Δρόμος για το ρεμπετικα*, 1977, 202-209.

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Greece. Interestingly, it was during the military dictatorship of 1967-74 that another section of the Greek population turned, again, to the rebetika. While the airwaves were dominated by stirring folk music from the mainland, young Greeks began listening to and playing rebetika in the small clubs of Plaka. Elderly musicians, including Roza Eskenazi, who hadn't been heard of in decades, were rediscovered and brought to Athenian clubs to perform. Again, there was a taste for songs that spoke of "the eternal poison of life". And again, it was the rebetika that seemed to appeal to a generation living under a stultifying, brutal regime.

Now that the bouzouki has become the symbolic equivalent of the flamenco guitar or the tango's bandoneon, the idea of the rebetika as "fringe" music or even working-class music has long since disappeared. It is worth remembering, as desperate refugees still risk their lives to cross Greece's porous eastern borders, and now meet with the same resentment the 1922 refugees faced, that the Asia Minor refugees who seemed to impose a heavy burden on the fledgling Greek state soon became its outstanding artists and leaders. And music that now seems to define Greekness once defined a group of social outcasts who played music together in the "liminal" space of Piraeus, creating an enduring hybrid.

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If I take one more step, I'm elsewhere: The Representation of Borders in Theo Angelopoulos' "Trilogy of Borders"

Vera Konidari

If I take one more step, I'm elsewhere. Or I die. With this evocative phrase, the filmmaker Theodore Angelopoulos contemplates the issue of borders in his film *The Suspended Step of the Stork*. Theo Angelopoulos' preoccupation with borders is a recurrent theme in his poetic cinematic world.

Borders have always been a major preoccupation in Greek society, especially after the establishment of Greece as an independent nation in the nineteenth century. Parallel to that, one can see a similar preoccupation with borders in all the countries of the same geographical area, the so-called Balkan countries. In a way, it is impossible to consider Greece as an entirely unique culture, as there are strong influences from – and towards – the neighbouring countries. Andrew Horton has pointed out that "whatever the Greek character is and becomes, Angelopoulos realizes, is determined in part by this background that goes beyond the borders of Greece as outlined on geographic and political maps".[1]

In Theo Angelopoulos' own words: "In dealing with borders, boundaries, the mixing of languages and cultures today, I'm trying to seek a new humanism, a new way".[2]

Instances of his preoccupations with borders can be seen for example in Angelopoulos' lyrical travelogue *Landscape in the Mist*. *Landscape in the Mist* is the story of two children, a girl and her younger brother, who try to find their father, whom they have never met, on a journey from Greece to Germany. Their quest is a poetic imaginary "bleak

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[1] Andrew Horton, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, p. 71.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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fairytale journey across vast landscapes of provincial Greece".[3] It is there that Angelopoulos asks the question "what is a border" through the words of the little boy Alexandros, only to get no answer from his older sister Voula.

In an interview, Angelopoulos had observed that he had posed that question in *Landscape in the Mist*, only to try to answer it some years later with his *Trilogy of Borders* shot during the 1990s:

The Suspended Step of the Stork (1991)
Ulysses' Gaze (1995)
Eternity and a Day (1998).

"How many borders do we have to cross before we reach home"*: The Suspended Step of the Stork*

Theo Angelopoulos shot *The Suspended Step of the Stork* in Florina, a border town in the north-western part of Greece. Florina borders both Albania and Northern Macedonia and one can see that it is an archetypal *borderland*. Angelopoulos did not choose that exact location by accident. The location of the film was equally important for Angelopoulos as was his choice of actors.[4] In that respect, the location becomes an intrinsic part of the film narrative. The bleak winter town, with many refugees waiting to receive permission to leave Greece, provided an excellent natural scenery for Angelopoulos to contemplate the issue of borders, whether physical, natural, mythical, or even mental.

In a very evocative scene, we watch the protagonist, a young journalist, standing on a bridge, which is the actual border between Greece and Albania. His companion, a Greek army Colonel, points to a blue line painted on the bridge saying "Greece ends in this blue line. If I take one more step I'm elsewhere. Or I die". This may be the most evocative phrase in the film, which sets the tone of the main theme of *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, which is the borders, the crossing of borders, or, in many instances, the inability to cross them.

The film plot is about a Greek journalist (played by Gregory Patrick Karr) who, while visiting a northern Greek town for work, notices

[3] Jill Forbes, "Biblical Odyssey: Landscape in the Mist", pp. 206-207.
[4] Angelopoulos has stated that "I would never be able to work without real stones, without real cold, without real people whom I meet at the locations I have chosen to shoot a film". See Κωνσταντίνος Αν. Θέμελης, *Θεόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος: Το Παρελθόν ως Ιστορία, το Μέλλον ως Φόρμα*, p. 41.

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an old man (Marcello Mastroianni) among people who live near the borders waiting for their chance to cross them. The man's face reminds the journalist of an acclaimed Greek politician who had suddenly disappeared many years ago. When he returns to Athens, he finds the politician's foreign wife (Jeanne Moreau), and asks her to follow him and see if that man is her long-lost husband. Eventually, she agrees. He returns to the bleak winter town.

A melancholic atmosphere – characteristic of Angelopoulos' filmography – pervades the whole film. The people who gather in the northern town, waiting for their chance to cross the borders, the soldiers who guard the borders, the grim winter scenery, the river-border that separates – and in some cases unites – the two sides of the borders, the journalist who enters into a strange relationship with a local girl only to find out later that she is the bride of a wedding ceremony across the river, and finally the lost politician who seems somehow stuck in this "Waiting Room", an exile in his own country, or even better a self-exile, unable to move forward or backward, are only instances of Angelopoulos' treatment of the concept of borders. Considering the historical changes of the last decades, the problems with immigration, refugees, the closing of borders and the people stuck in "waiting rooms" all over Greece, the film's main theme is extremely topical and, in certain respects, it can even be viewed as Theo Angelopoulos' apocalyptic vision of the future.

"I will tell you about the journey […] The whole human adventure. The story that never ends...": *Ulysses' Gaze*

In Angelopoulos' *Ulysses' Gaze* (which won the Grand Prize of the Jury at Cannes Film Festival in 1995), the recent Balkan history urges the hero to travel around the Balkans, from Greece to Albania, then to North Macedonia (at the time of the filming, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and finally Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Bosnia. *A* (that's the protagonist's character name, played by Harvey Keitel) goes back to his hometown somewhere in Northern Greece (and here we have the first reference to Angelopoulos' previous film *The Suspended Step of the Stork*) to begin his search for three undeveloped film reels which belonged to the Manakis brothers, the first Greek cinematographers.[5] Thus, *A* embarks on a long journey, literally and metaphorically, through the Balkans, to find

[5] For his choice of the protagonists' name, Angelopoulos has explained: "Why A? It's an alphabetical choice". See IMDB at: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114863/plotsummary

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the undeveloped reels and discover the "first gaze". His final destination is the war-torn Sarajevo.

*Ulysses' Gaze c*ould be characterised as a continuation of *The Suspended Step of the Stork*. Indeed, watching Angelopoulos' films, it is not difficult for someone to realise that they are always a "work in progress".[6] When asked by Gideon Bachmann if he could ever finish a film, Angelopoulos had replied: "I can't. You will have noticed, if you look carefully, that my films never really end. They are all 'works in progress'".[7] For that purpose, the director avoided putting the word "End" when his films were finished. In a way, it seems that each film somehow takes over from the previous Angelopoulos film. An illustrative example is, in fact, the direct reference to *The Suspended Step of the Stork* at the beginning of *Ulysses' Gaze*. During the projection of *A*'s film in Florina, the audience has the chance to listen to dialogues from *The Suspended Step of the Stork*. It is not by chance that the monologue refers to the issue of borders: "How many borders do we have to cross before we reach home", wonders the hero of Angelopoulos' previous film. The same question disturbs *A*, a Greek-American filmmaker who will cross many borders in the unstable Balkans to reach his personal *Ithaka*.[8] Thus, the issue of borders is introduced in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, which Angelopoulos takes one step further in his next film *Ulysses' Gaze*.

Angelopoulos' film stresses the circularity of events in the history of the Balkans. The First World War originated from Sarajevo at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *Ulysses' Gaze*, Sarajevo is once more a war-torn city in less than a century. In John Orr's words "The Sarajevo of *Ulysses' Gaze* is both place and non place, real and imaginary at the same time".[9] Sarajevo, then, becomes a symbolic city as much as an actual one. Balkan countries have been struggling for centuries to defend their borders and their national identities. Not only in the 1990s, when Angelopoulos' film was shot, but also in our own days, almost three decades later. The history of every Balkan country is the result of wars and conflicts mainly with each other. Different historical periods carry similarities

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[6] See "The Time that Flows By: *Eternity and a Day*", interview with Gideon Bachmann.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ithaka: a Greek island in the Ionian Sea regarded as the home of Homer's Odysseus. Ithaka symbolises the destination of a long journey through life. "Ithaka" is also the title of a well-known poem by the acclaimed Greek poet C.P. Cavafy. Available at: https://www.onassis.org/initiatives/cavafy-archive/the-canon/ithaka.
[9] John Orr, *The Art and Politics of Film*, p. 81.

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concerning the Balkan borders and this repetition of history is clearly stated in *A*'s journeys.

John Orr has written that *Ulysses' Gaze* "touches on frontiers and wider geopolitics. While Greece has come closer to Western Europe through the European Union, the break-up of federal Yugoslavia has entailed a rethinking of relations with Balkan neighbours".[10]

The following examples will illustrate Angelopoulos' contemplation of the theme of borders.

A crosses physical but also time borders at the scene at the Bulgarian border. Here, the transition is much more complex than a typical border crossing. In the film's characteristic scene, *A* (Keitel) gradually becomes Yannis Manakis, and his steps towards the border police take him back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In other similar instances, *A* breaks the borders of time at his own volition and moves back and forth into his, but also into Mannakis', life.

The river that leads to Sarajevo stands as a border to another world. *A*'s boat trip to Sarajevo, reminiscent of Ulysses' descent to Hades, is another instance of a poetic cinematic transition.

Towards the end of the film, after many adventures and tragic losses, in the damaged cinema in Sarajevo, *A* has finally watched the first Manakis' film. The Manakis' gaze from the beginning of the twentieth century, the first gaze, transcends the borders of time and meets *A*'s tearful gaze at the end of the century. "I will tell you about the journey, all night long […] the whole human adventure. The adventure that never ends". Those are *A*'s last words in the film. The human adventure is a journey and the journey is the crossing of various borders. The film may be ending, but *A* is still in Saravejo, he has to find his way back, his adventure will continue.

In *Ulysses' Gaze*, Angelopoulos' search of the first "gaze" becomes a non-typical road movie, where history and reality blend together, and borders are restated.

"Xenitis", or "one who is in exile everywhere": borders and transition in *Eternity and a Day*

With *Eternity and a Day*, Angelopoulos narrates the last inner journey of a fatally ill writer, Alexandros (Bruno Ganz), who regrets the lost moments of his life and the time that passes relentlessly. His encounter with an Albanian boy will help him to come to terms with his life, becoming in a way the mediator between reality and fantasy. *Eternity and a Day* won the

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

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Palm D' Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998.

The film is structured upon the interaction of memory, the real and fantasy.

We will focus on certain moments in the film where the key concepts of borders, exile, and transition are most evident.

Alexandros drives the boy to the Albanian borders to help him find his grandmother. It turns out that the boy has lied, and there is no grandmother on the other side of the borders. During the border control scenes, we witness a white snowy landscape – reminiscent of previous depictions of borders in Angelopoulos' filmography — the wires that define the limits of the boundaries, and people hanging on them like sparrows unable to cross to the other side beyond the borders.[11]

In another instance, Alexandros narrates a story about the Greek national poet Dionysios Solomos (1798-1857) whose "Hymn to Liberty" became the Greek national anthem. Although Alexandros never mentions the poet's name, those who are familiar with Solomos' poetry will recognise the poet's identity. According to Alexandros, Solomos did not possess the Greek language in-depth and for that reason he "collected" words from the local people of Zakynthos in order to find the right words for his poetry. Later, Alexandros and the boy will start the same "game", and the boy "sells" words to Alexandros. One of the new words for Alexandros is the word "xenitis" from the Greek word «ξένος» (alien, foreigner). The word means "one who is in exile everywhere" and Angelopoulos uses this word to illuminate further Alexandros' mental and physical alienation from his family, his place, his life. The word "xenitis" is among the last words he utters – or better he shouts — towards the sea in the final scene. And maybe this word carries the biggest significance in the film. All the action and the transitions in time and place are highlighting this simple truth: Alexandros has become a "xenos", a foreigner in his own home, family, life. The encounter with the Albanian boy is his chance to redeem himself, to come to terms with his inner exile, and to try to reconcile himself with the idea of his imminent death, by helping the little boy begin his own journey to new seas, new ports, and possibly a better life.

In the final moments of the film, Alexandros talks to his long-gone dead wife:

[11] The "sparrows" simile is taken from the script of *Eternity and a Day*. See Θεόδωρος Αγγελόπουλος, *Μια Αιωνιότητα και μια Μέρα, Σενάριο*, p. 44.

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Being beyond in the night.
With words I fetch you back, there you are,
all is true and a waiting
For truth.[12]

The exiled poet manages to pass to the "other side", which has been made possible with the use of "words". The words become the "metaphor" that gives him the means to make the transition. The words haunt him and release him.

Epilogue

The Suspended Step of the Stork, *Ulysses' Gaze*, and *Eternity and a Day*: all three films are in a way journeys towards, across, or beyond borders. In *The Suspended Step of the Stork,* the heroes inhabit a borderland, a no man's land, a mythical place. "It's the border that drives them mad. The boundaries", observes the Colonel. People are trapped in the village across the river, the so-called "Waiting Room". They "cross their borders to find freedom and create a new border here", utters the Colonel in another instance.

On the contrary, in *Ulysses' Gaze*, the hero crosses many borders in search of the first "gaze" and in consequence his own "gaze".

In *Eternity and a Day*, Angelopoulos moves a step further. Although he does not forget to include in his film "actual" borders, the hero only needs to fight for his inner borders, the borders of time, the borders of language, the borders of perception, the borders of life and death.

Angelopoulos' films and his "obsession" with the borders, given the ever timely debate on the issue of borders across the Balkans, Europe, or even the globe, can be viewed as a metaphor of the never-ending human experience: the crossing or the failure of crossing borders becomes the archetypal human journey, an Odyssey which entails pain, loss, exile, but also a drive to exceed them, no matter the cost. In maybe one of the most emblematic scenes of Angelopoulos' films in *The Suspended Step of the Stork*, the camera traces a wedding that takes place across the two sides of the river-border. The bride with her family and guests stand on the Greek side of the river, whereas the groom and his people stand on the other side. The priest goes on with the ceremony as if everything is normal. In that

[12] The phrase was taken (with minor changes on the part of Angelopoulos) from the poem "Your/being beyond" by the German poet Paul Celan; see: *Poems of Paul Celan*, p. 161.

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scene, Angelopoulos "is showing us a triumph of love and marriage over space, boundaries, borders and thus politics and history".[13]

Greek people, from their birth, become deeply aware of the issue of borders: Greece is in itself a borderland. Crossing borders, building borders, breaking borders, laying down borders, old borders, new borders, allegorical borders … Theo Angelopoulos sought – and succeeded — to depict in his cinematic universe the deep influence borders have exerted on the Greek collective memory.

In this essay, we took a glimpse of Angelopoulos' "trilogy of borders". Nevertheless, Angelopoulos deals with borders and exile in other films such as *Landscape in the Mist*, *Voyage to Cythera*, or *The Weeping Meadow*. Angelopoulos' characters are constantly crossing – or failing to cross — borders, while on many occasions they only inhabit dystopic borderlands, non-places. In that respect, it would be no exaggeration to suggest that Angelopoulos' cinematography captures the essence of the significance of borders for the Greek psyche.

Andrew Horton, in the preface to his *Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, has written that the films of Theo Angelopoulos "matter because they dare to cross a number of borders: between nations, between history and myth, the past and the present, voyaging and stasis, between betrayal and a sense of community, chance and individual fate, realism and surrealism, silence and sound, between what is seen and what is withheld and not seen, and between what is 'Greek' and what is not".[14]

In other words, the themes of borders, transition, exile, on both physical and metaphysical terms, are shaped in their symbolical forms in the films of Theo Angelopoulos. Although the main thematic components strike one as fundamentally Greek, yet the messages and interpretations are universal and can be understood by people who are not familiar with the Greek or even the Balkan culture. Thus, the films of Angelopoulos, by their representation of borders, borderlands and non-places, capture the never-ending quest of humanity: the need to find a "home", to belong, to be loved. An earthly paradise becomes a utopia (a *paradise lost*). And life, no matter one's best intentions, is spent in an earthly dystopia.

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[13] Andrew Horton, "Theo Angelopoulos and the Cinema of Contemplation", p. 15.
[14] Andrew Horton, *The Films of Theo Angelopoulos: A Cinema of Contemplation*, p. xi.

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Part Five:

The Poetry of Exile

Robin Fedden, Elie Papadimitriou, Lawrence Durrell, Kapka Kassabova

This selection of "Poetry of Exile" has a dual aspect: we include, firstly, long poems by Elie Papadimitriou and Lawrence Durrell, written in Egypt during the second world war; secondly, three contemporary poems by Kapka Kassabova, from her collection *Someone else's life* (2003) which seem to us to echo the same sense of displacement, disorientation and otherness reflected in Papadimitriou's and Durrell's personal experience in exile.

The second world war, as experienced by expatriates in Egypt, is reflected in many literary genres, including poetry, novels, essays and memoirs. The war threw together English writers and Greek exiles, including George Seferis, a poet-diplomat attached to the Greek government-in-exile and a future Nobel Laureate. Seferis's poem "Here Among the Bones", written in Cairo in 1943, is one of many from this period included in *Personal Landscape*, the journal edited by Durrell, Robin Fedden and Bernard Spencer, which, together with Fedden's essay "An Anatomy of Exile" (from which we present extracts below), inspired the decision to create this section of our book.

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Ανάμεσα στα κόκκαλα εδώ
Ανάμεσα στα κόκκαλα
μια μουσική:
περνάει την άμμο,
περνάει τη θάλασσα.
Ανάμεσα στα κόκαλα
ήχος φλογέρας
ήχος τυμπάνου απόμακρος
κι ένα ψιλό κουδούνισμα,
περνάει τους κάμπους τους στεγνούς
περνάει τη θάλασσα με τα δελφίνια.
Ψηλά βουνά, δε μας ακούτε!
Βοήθεια! Βοήθεια!
Ψηλά βουνά θα λειώσουμε,
νεκροί με τους νεκρούς!

Here among the bones
Among the bones
a music:
it moves across the sand,
it moves across the sea.
Among the bones
the sound of a flute
the sound of a distant drum
and the faint ringing of bells,
from across the dry fields
across the dolphin-sea.
High mountains, can you hear us?
Help! Help!
High mountains, we will fall apart,
dead among the dead

It is perhaps significant that the first issue of *Personal Landscape* (in January 1942) contained Durrell's poem "*Je est un Autre*", inspired by a phrase of Rimbaud, and celebrating the idea of the writer and his double: "In three European cities / He has watched me watching him [...] often / I hear him laughing in the other room".[1] In this case, perhaps, the writer is exiled from himself and yet existing in "the other room". For Durrell, there is always an "other" self, haunting and judging who might also be admonishing him or her to be elsewhere. In wartime exile, this might be felt as an accusation, questioning the *raison d'être* or the very entitlement to separate existence of the writer. This uneasiness, this uncertain balance between absence and presence, is evoked in all the poems here – Papadimitriou's, Durrell's and Kassabova's.

The collection *Personal Landscape: an anthology of exile*, published immediately following the end of the second world war, was a selection from the eight issues which appeared during the war. It included poets who would become well-known, such as Keith Douglas, Terence Tiller, George Seferis, G S Fraser and Bernard Spencer, and others whose post-war reputations have hardly survived. It featured "Written in the Third Year of the War", a poem by Olivia Manning, better known as a novelist than a poet, whose *Levant Trilogy* (a sequel to her *Balkan Trilogy*) described expatriate life in wartime Egypt.[2] In 1944 she also contributed "Poets in Exile", an essay on *Personal Landscape* published in *Horizon*.

[1] L Durrell, *Collected Poems*, p. 106.
[2] The trilogy consisted of *The Danger Tree* (1977), *The Battle Lost and Won* (1978) and *The Sum of Things* (1980); the *Trilogy* was published as a single volume in 1982.

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ANATOMY OF EXILE

ROBIN FEDDEN

This slightly edited version of Robin Fedden's essay seems initially to concentrate on the context of the poets in the second world war – mostly Greek and English – whose presence in Egypt gave rise to the journal Personal Landscape. *Indeed, Fedden emphasises that his essay is not a disquisition on the nature of exile, but his discussion of the cultural differences experienced by the exiles underlines the condition of displacement which had brought them to Egypt, which in consequence made them aware of many other forms of dislocation: the abrupt contrast between their predominantly Christian heritage and the severity of Islam; the ubiquitous and shocking evidence of dirt, beggars and disease; the suspension of the seasons with the disruption in the climate; and the general sense of living "against the stream" – the absence of a familiar "cultural beat" which brought together the editors to* Personal Landscape *and their contributors. These contrasts between presences and absences, between custom and reality, were as stark in the context of this brutal war as they would be in similar circumstances nearer our own time, and as evocative of the sense of distress, rootlessness and disorientation experienced by exiles of whatever kind.*

The journal was published in Cairo in eight issues, from 1942 to 1945, and Personal Landscape: an anthology of exile *was published in a volume by Editions Poetry (London) in 1945. The felt need for the journal is indicative of the more general creativity that arises from conditions of displacement and exile.*

Writers, like schoolboys, have an innate tendency to form "gangs", and thus anthologies, except the respectable and retrospective kind, are often group productions, a "party" literature expressing a fairly unified attitude to life and perhaps some unity of style. The writers share no common outlook and subscribe to no common policy; in spite of the efforts of well-meaning and misguided critics who see flocks and shepherds everywhere,

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they remain united only in exile. Exile however, as they have discovered, can be a very powerful factor in conditioning the way people and poets react. Thus, though headed in different directions and starting from very different points, these poetic bodies have been moving through the same strange and negative medium and have inevitably acquired something of the exile-mind. On the word "exile" in this context, and hereafter, I have imposed, it should be added, a rather special limitation of meaning. Though some of the contributors to this anthology have left, or lost, their homes and families in Greece and elsewhere on the European Continent, it is not to the tragedy of exile that the word is here applied but rather to its *stagnation.* The latter may or may not occur against a tragic background, but always threatens when an individual is isolated for any length of time in an alien context which he does not understand and in which circumstances alone have placed him.

For a variety of reasons many people find exile in Egypt difficult out of all proportion to the trials which at first appear to be tangibly involved, and it is perhaps therefore worthwhile making a very brief Anatomy of this Exile. It may at any rate show what many of the writers in *Personal Landscape* shared, owing to their common geographical background, and in spite of the most disparate ideas on, and approaches to, life.

First of all there are the difficulties of climate. Egypt was designed for Northern Europeans to visit, not to live in. The winter is incontestably perfect, like an ideal English summer; but when one outstays what was once the tourist season and drags on for three or four years, as is inevitable in war-time, the disadvantages of having no real winter become all too apparent. It is not that Egyptian summers are intolerably hot, though 110 in the shade is not exceptional, but that the Northerner comes terribly to lack definite *changes* of season and the recurring stimuli that they offer. Where it is always relatively hot, where trees do not shed their leaves, the rhythm of the seasons to which he is innately accustomed is broken. The year is flaccid. The wheel of the months ceases to turn with any vitality. Milton said that he could write only in the winter: what is a poet to do in a country where spring and autumn are indistinguishable to all except the trained naturalist?

The landscape too, though beautiful in its own relaxed way, is as flaccid as the year. Except for the deserts where only the soldiers have lived, it is boneless and unarticulated. No rock, no gesture on the part of the earth, disturbs the heavy Nilotic mould which is cultivated Egypt. Everything is muffled. Flat, alluvial and spineless, the fields turn out their bumper crops month after month: but the Northerner tends to turn out

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nothing. It is all too rich, too unresistant; he can get no purchase for eye or foot or mind in this loose accumulating silt. Further, considering one day the almost indecent stimulus which by contrast it holds for the vegetable world, he stumbles on the disturbing poetic truth that these fields are not soil but bone-mould and excrement. The exile everywhere walks on the dead and their deposits. This narrow strip of green, supporting life between two deserts, has stirred with a close maggot-like activity since before the beginning of history. The villages have always touched and men elbowed each other into the grave. In this restricted space the continual evacuation and dying have never failed. The dead of countless generations, packed like sardines, stuff the earth. It bursts with corpses. Thus, though the crops thicken — they take as many as six cuttings from a single clover crop — and the cotton-fields bear pure gold, the earth is dead and deadening. But for the exile in his first claustrophobic panic there is nowhere else to go. The only way out of the Nile valley is into the deserts or back across the Mediterranean into a closed Europe, He must get accustomed to standing on people's faces.

Not the least curious thing about a country with so much "past", is that the stranger finds no historical continuity. Upon the black alluvial soil stand pharaonic temples and concrete apartment houses, and nothing links them. Hypostyle halls and mediaeval mosques are well enough to visit and admire, but they don't connect up with the way one thinks. What is missed and missing is the middle distance; where there should be an eighteenth century, there is the Turkish hiatus. Saladin is juxtaposed to cinemas, and to-day, having no ancestry, is ridiculously isolated and uncertain of itself. For the average cultured European with his seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from which his taste may wander but to which it inevitably returns, a recent historical continuity is the very ground he stands on, and this lacuna, which afflicts Egypt and most of the Levant, seems almost indecent. The rootless present wobbles like an ill-made table. In savage and colonial places, Kenya or the Solomon Islands, one expects such discontinuity and adjusts oneself accordingly, but the innocent exile coming to the "cradle of civilisation" is taken aback.

There is another sort of isolation, cultural rather than temporal, which many people in Egypt find an exhausting business in the long run. It is possible to travel almost anywhere in Europe without getting quite off a familiar cultural beat: whatever the country, Christianity — whether the inhabitants like it or not — is at the back of the way they think and act. Once you cross to Islamic Africa it is a different story; nothing is to be taken for granted and you don't even know the general shape and outline of things. The current of thought sets towards Mecca and the European is

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inevitably swimming all the time against the stream. Like a vegetarian among headhunters or a pacifist in war-time, he cannot hope to find his own life and his own effort seconded and strengthened by unconscious community with, and participation in, the life and effort of people around him. Socially, he has no umbilical cord pumping energy into him from a common traditional culture. This psychological isolation, true for the "Christian" everywhere outside the Christian world, is perhaps especially pronounced in Egypt where the substratum of thought is so profoundly and aggressively Muslim. To those outside Islam nothing is given and every inch of ground has to be fought for. Any gains the exile makes are strictly his own. This of course applies to his relatively prolonged stay as contrasted with the visit of the tourist-traveller. To the latter, in a superficial way, everything is given and the stimulus of the new country is often in proportion to its decided strangeness. Only when the reckoning is made in years, rather than weeks or months, and the guide books are put away, does the price of isolation become apparent. The European lives outside his classico-hebraic pattern at considerable cost.

Such shared life as Egypt offers him in the cosmopolitan society of Cairo and Alexandria — almost the only life available outside the great blind stream of Islam — will only emphasise his isolation. Of a nightmarish unreality, the existence led by the wealthy Europeanised upper class epitomises all that the word *Levantine* means: money and money values, a total absence of taste and tradition, and a pseudo-French culture. The amalgam, for all the pounds put into it, does not even glitter and *art nouveau* has destroyed any style or vestiges of Turkish *rococo* charm which it may once have possessed. More than this it has, for the least sensitive observer, an inescapably sinister side: the parquet floors quake over an abyss of poverty; the black satin and pearls are complementary to rags and tatters. Nothing but their labours link the peasants to the cotton kings. Even their diseases are different. Where there are no gradations, no half tones, there is nothing to transmit a social current: the two worlds are juxtaposed in monstrous isolation. For the European without a knowledge of Arabic or the open sesame of the *Koran*, it is almost impossible to bridge the gap. In a country of over sixteen millions where no middle class exists, he cannot know the real Egypt and is inevitably condemned to Levantine unreality. Yet, unlike the local upper class of the towns, he fully knows how unreal it all is and skates on the artificial crust with considerable misgiving.

Finally, the war, which elsewhere would probably have given meaning to a banishment for which it was directly responsible, has in the Middle East lacked poetic, if not practical, urgency for all but the minority

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who actually fought through the desert. Most of the inconveniences of war as they affect the non-combatant have been present — black-outs, restrictions, parades, long working hours, rationing, rocketing prices, and a vast ubiquitous black-market – yet at the same time its tonic qualities have been absent. It has been difficult to feel the stimulus of danger or of participation in a common effort for a common end, when living in a country that has preserved at any rate a paper neutrality and where the vast majority of the inhabitants have had no knowledge of, and no interest in, the issues at stake. The desert is not the sown and is indeed so sharply divided from it that it was not easy either for Englishmen in Egypt, or for the minority of educated Egyptians, to achieve any sense of danger and tension from the desert campaign, or to translate their feelings about it into a source of emotional energy. Only when Rommel, advancing on Alamein, was almost in sight of the green belt did the war suddenly become a tonic and effect just that stepping-up of emotional tempo which lends events immediate significance and obscures the day-to-day dreariness of a state of semi-hostility. War in a neutral country like Egypt is war at its most sterile; expatriates of all nations have felt here the length and inconvenience rather than the inspiration of the struggle.

This then has been the exile-background: bone mould, temples, temporal and cultural isolation, an unreal society and a long war. An alarmingly negative catalogue against which reaction has been the only salvation. But poets react by poetry. Further, understandably enough, they like to see their poems in print, and since English publishers in 1941 were a long way off around the Cape, *Personal Landscape* became almost inevitable. Poetry was the poet-exile's defensive reply to stagnation; publication on the spot was our reply to distances. Even so publication would perhaps never have taken place without the added stimulus of boredom and friendship, especially the latter. Larry Durrell and Bernard Spencer, who first hatched the scheme, were old friends and when they suggested I should co-operate it was something in the nature of a private publication that we initially envisaged. Environment and personal friendship, and not a specific poetic practice, was the bond. I had first met Larry Durrell somehow somewhere after dinner in Athens, where he had come on a flying expansive visit from his house in Corfu. Knowing the poet and writer, I expected, in the person, unusual energy and an even more unusual approach to experience. In both, my expectation fell short of the reality. His exuberant vitality kept us talking on a bench in Syntagma Square until it grew cold and late, and then took us on to the Argentina Cabaret. There, a few yards from the spot where Max Nimietz, a poet in living if such people exist, came so appropriately to die not many weeks

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later,[1] we continued our discussion, going home at last through one of those rinsed and lucid Athenian dawns which so decisively start each day afresh. For me at any rate the experience was too good not to be repeated. It was at about the same time that I renewed an old acquaintance with Bernard Spencer, in the ruins of that Fonthill built by the extraordinary Duchesse de Plaisance on the slopes of Pentelicus. The breadth and disarming honesty which so inform his poetry were clearly there in the poet, and proof even to the acid Athenian gossip which, perhaps in deference to the Duchess, we later talked by the Pendeli Monastery, drinking retzina under the elm trees. Thus *Personal Landscape* was for all three of us in some degree the extension of moods and relationships shaped in a country to which from our exile we often looked back.

Fedden's brief analysis of the contributors to Personal Landscape *ends with the justification for the inclusion of Elie Papadimitriou's "Anatolia":*

If we really wished to justify this anthology, and the vital part which Greece and things Greek play in it (and have played in various numbers of *Personal Landscape*), we should, I suppose, claim that in bringing *Anatolia* to England we were introducing an unknown poetess of the first importance. Elie Papadimitriou, who wrote it, was better known to the peasants of Euboea and the fishermen of the Islands than to the social milieu which she inherited in Athens. That is perhaps why she was shadowed by Metaxist agents, and even in exile has not been left in peace. Chivvied out of Egypt by timid and powerful authority, she now lives in a monastery in Palestine and continues to write. That she should be able to do so, no one who reads *Anatolia* can fail to regard as important. Even through the opacity of translation, the magnitude, the originality, the poetic confidence of the poet and the poem, come shining through.

[1] Max Nimietz (or Nimiec), a Polish count, was a friend of Lawrence Durrell, Gostan Zarian and Theodore Stephanides in Corfu and was one of the dedicatees of Durrell's *Prospero's Cell.* As Fedden intimates, he died from a heart attack while dancing at the Argentina Cabaret in Athens.

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THREE RECITATIVES FROM *ANATOLIA*

ELIE PAPADIMITRIOU

Elie Papadimitriou was born in Smyrna, at that time a predominantly Greek city in Anatolia, in 1906. The "Anatolian Catastrophe" of 1922 – the defeat of the "Megali Idea" or "Great Concept", an irredentist ambition to re-establish Greece both territorially and culturally – is both the hinterland and the foreground of her poem. The teenage Papadimitriou was evacuated to Athens, where she became a communist and a budding writer, and in 1940 she was carried to Alexandria on the same ship as Seferis, and Olivia Manning and her husband Reggie Smith. Artemis Cooper recalled her as "ascetic and yet intensely alive, although deeply religious, a Communist".[1] In "Poets in Exile", Manning described Papadimitriou as "a gifted poet and the most important woman in EAM".[2]

"Anatolia" is, like Lawrence Durrell's "In Europe", a threnody, specifically recording with graphic horror how the places, people, and landscape of Anatolia were raped by the Turkish forces which were both anti-Greek and anti-Christian in their reaction to this manifestation of the "Megali Idea". The poem suggests the near-extinction of Greek life in the region where ethnic Greeks had lived peaceably for centuries.[3]

The events depicted in Papadimitriou's poem are closely related to Seferis's own experience: he was born in Vourla, near Smyrna (a village celebrated in *Anatolia*) and his poetry is permeated by the sense of

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[1] A Cooper, *Cairo in the War*, p. 155.

[2] EAM [Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο,*Ethnikó Apeleftherotikó Métopo*] was the "National Liberation Front" of the Greek resistance to the German occupation; it was the ideological wing of ELAS [Ελληνικός Λαϊκός Απελευθερωτικός Στρατός (ΕΛΑΣ), *Ellinikós Laïkós Apeleftherotikós Stratós*] the National Liberation Army. Predominantly left-wing, it became the chief protagonist of the republican (losing) side in the ensuing civil war. See Durrell's comments (below) on the significance of the aftermath.

[3] The episode is described in a contemporary novel, *Aeolia*, by Ilias Venezis (published 1943) to which Lawrence Durrell contributed a foreword for the English translation, and in our own time by Panos Karnezis's *The Maze* (2004).

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personal and Hellenic loss emanating from this expulsion from the "Eden" of Anatolia.

Papadimitriou's arrival in Egypt was the catalyst for the translation into English (by the poet herself) of *Anatolia* and its part-publication in *Personal Landscape*.[4] In fact, *Anatolia* and "In Europe" are like mirror-images, not least because both are described by their authors as "recitative", suggesting a context of both speech and singing. One can appreciate, in *Anatolia*, the auditory nature of Papadimitriou's lament for her birthplace and its hinterland – its vigour, its solemnity, its rituals, its everyday life of common folk, the sheer immanence of the local and the intimate, and its ultimate extinction. Durrell commented: "The whole poem has the quality of 'speaking voices'."[5] He saw it as "a sort of 'Anabasis' [...] It is a sort of shadow-play [...] It is certainly the most important big poem to appear of recent years in Greek".[6] And if that were not enough, he dedicated "In Europe" "To Elie", whom, when first meeting her, he had called "this intriguing and solitary authoress".[7]

Philip Sherrard's comment unconsciously links Papadimitriou's and Durrell's poems: "In that catastrophe, men and women and children suffered a pattern of despair and tragedy which some years later was to become the common pattern of Europe".[8]

Anatolia later became a play (1952) and Papadimitriou published at least four other volumes of poetry, in addition to a series of oral testimonies by survivors of the Anatolian Catastrophe, and of the war in Germany and the subsequent civil war in Greece. These were collected as "We hear your voice, homeland" in 1964.[9]

Papadimitriou died in Athens in 1993. Her history, after Egypt, is almost a parable of the fate of the Left in modern Greece: with the end of the war, and with very strong British and American pressure to suppress the left-wing (at core, communist) republican side in the civil war, the Left was effectively excoriated from political life, and particularly during the military junta of 1967-74.

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[4] It appeared in instalments in 1942, 1944 and 1945. *Anatolia*, Olivia Manning said, was writen by the author herself in "vivid, exact English".

[5] L Durrell, "Airgraph on Refugee Poets in Africa" (1944), reprinted in *From the Elephant's Back*, pp. 29-33.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] P Sherrard, *The Marble Threshing Floor: Studies in Modern Greek Poetry*, p. 190.

[9] And republished in 1972-79 as *The Common Spirit – Ο κοινός λόγος*, which was also staged as a play in 1984.

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Within the circle of the Greek Left, Elie Papadimitriou continues to be celebrated not only for her writings but as a distinguished photographer whose extensive archive is held at the Benaki Museum in Athens. Although Jonathan Bolton argues that *Anatolia* "has since attained canonical status in modern Greek letters",[10] this is true only of the canon maintained by the Left and in the Greek language. The near non-existence of Papadimitriou and her work in translation means that it has little currency outside Greece. Due to this exclusion of the Left from the national dialogue (and indeed the national narrative), Papadimitriou's reputation outside the Left has been negligible up to now. Her work does not appear in any of the anthologies of modern Greek poetry, nor is she discussed in any critical survey of modern Greek literature. It is as if, like the Greek culture of Anatolia itself, she has been consigned to the silence of history – a ghostly absence rather than a vital presence.

This is all the more ironic since, in 1945, Robin Fedden and others were anxious to identify Papadimitriou as "an unknown poetess of the first importance" whose work in translation should be made available to a wider readership. He was later to state that Keith Douglas and Elie Papadimitriou were the two poets he was most proud to have published.[11] But as Roger Bowen wryly observes, "her own politics ensured her obscurity, if not her vulnerability, in the postwar years".[12]

This obscurity was foreseen in Egypt at the time: Fedden recorded that prior to leaving Athens in 1940, "she was shadowed by Metaxist [fascist] agents" and "even in exile she has not been left in peace". At the end of the war, Fedden tells us, "she was chivvied out of Egypt" by the authorities. Durrell, recommending her to T S Eliot, said that she and her companion Miquette Averoff were "the core of the EAM ideologists" and were, therefore, "in fearfully bad odour".[13] Composing his "Epilogue" to *Prospero's Cell*, he thought it prudent not to identify Papadimitriou, but paraphrased her – accurately enough – as "Eleutheria [freedom]": he recalled her "drawn face [...] with its haunting eyes reading the last few lines of her great poem".[14] And writing at the same time to Henry Miller, he saw the British-American emphasis on the extermination of the Left in Greece as as "ignoble and stupid unimaginativeness [...] We are defending the Acropolis caryatid by caryatid against the rest of Greece.

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[10] J Bolton, *Personal Landscapes*, p. 13.
[11] R Bowen, *"Many Histories Deep"*, p. 67.
[12] Ibid., pp. 211-12.
[13] 5 May 1945, in "Letters to T S Eliot", in *Twentieth Century Literature* 33/1 (1987).
[14] L Durrell, *Prospero's Cell*, p. 132.

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Not that the EAM is any less totalitarian than Metaxas was;[15] but [...] the thought of British troops fighting them [...] makes one's blood run cold."[16]

In introducing her work (see the "Note" at the start of "Anatolia") Fedden applauded the "poetic confidence of the poet and the poem". He was signalling not only her technical and emotional skills as a poet but her certainty about the events, places, peoples and landscapes she depicts, about the spirit which makes them possible and which emanates from them.

Roger Bowen's reference to the "undeniable [...] power derived from an unheroic sympathy with the texture of people's lives" marks the high point of recognition among English-speaking critics. Identifying Papadimitriou's "unheroic sympathy" exactly pinpoints the style which makes no special claim for the orthodoxy of the "texture of people's lives", yet juxtaposes that low-key style with the other orthodoxy of Turkish nationalism which was to annihilate it. Exploring her "deep names", Bowen successfully establishes that "*Anatolia* becomes an ur-text for the exile experience" achieving more than its status as "the scripture of modern Greece", because it contains "exile carried into exile".[17]

Three Recitatives from "Anatolia"

Note: This poem, from which these recitatives are taken, is one of the most important recent productions in modern Greek; begun some years ago in Greece, it was carried into exile by the authoress and finished in the appropriate refugee atmosphere of the 'Luna Park Hotel' in Cairo. It was first issued privately in Cairo at the end of 1940.

Its theme is that of the Asia Minor disaster; its form dramatic — borrowed from the traditional shadow-play; its treatment, curiously enough for a heroic theme, is unheroic but eloquent, steady, poignant, very Greek. The recitatives here published are in literal English translation by the authoress herself.

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[15] Ioannis Metaxas was the fascist dictator of Greece from 1936 to 1941.
[16] *The Durrell-Miller Letters 1935-1980*, p. 180.
[17] R Bowen, *"Many Histories Deep"*, p. 49.

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FIRST RECITATIVE

Now in August I evoke,
I evoke those Christian names
Which have propped up the shores of Anatolia
Beginning with the three harbourless harbours of Pontus,
Samsûnda, Trapezûnda, Kerasûnda,
And like two ancient leaden seals suspended,
Crômne and Sânda.
Upon the brows of the untravelled mountains
Where a forgotten Greek was still in use,
They said «ouk» for «no» and for the ox «bous»;

Further, islands of Polis and Polis herself,
The much dreamed-upon tumult;
Kêos and Moundaniâ, havens for Brôusa,
Mârmara with its migrations of fishes,
Aivalî and the breeched men of Aivalî,
These of the seaboard first among smugglers
Those of the land for the pruning of olives,
And all their psalters lettered men;
Then the wharves of Smyrna famous
For all the stacked merchandise,
And dawdling down the glass-penned coffee-shops.

Now for its terrors,
Vourlâ, Tsesmês, Alâtsata and small villages
Praised by none save their own villagers;
Sôkia, Koussândasi, where the honey
Drips from the branches in the gardens of figs.
The plain is black with innumerable herds,
Horses and oxen and sheep with broad-tails;
Often the Samiots pounced on them and robbed,
Coming in their caiëques from the near island.

Jackals pass swimming here
When the muscatel grapes ripen
You can hear the crowing of cocks
In the dead calms upon the waters.
Here Kamilla, the giant mountain
Hurls down the squalls like boulders

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Through her ravines; and beyond
Faraway Makrî and Adâlia
Inside its towering walls, Mersîna
Where Arabia begins
The white turbans begin to multiply
And Christendom dwindles.

Now other deep names:
Nîgdhi, Sevâstia, Kastamonî, Kaesâria
From the time of the saints and bishops
Recorded in the Great Calendar
And before the war closed all the roads
The countrymen of Saint Basil came down
And sang the carols;
They also at the approach of winter
Travelled about to comb and clean
The mattress-cotton, tamboura on the shoulders.

From there the camels carried down
All import and export, coffee, sugar,
Flowered stuffs, tobacco and poppy-seed.
At night the doorways of caravanserais
Were blocked with bales
And daylong rang their bells,
Seeking a bride after the Turkish proverb.
  The shrill bell sang: *Evlen-direlim*
  The middle bell sang: *Nerdén-boulaloum*
  And the deep bell sang: *Soordàn boordàn boolalòom.*

Here the very sand bore fruit. Harvests
Without seed, cockles and mussels,
But all the riches of the Christians
Were gardens submarine,
A longing swayed them endlessly like water
Blurring them,
Because they ached for Greece
As for their land,

From the day Constantinople fell,
They sang the old songs.
And time passed for them slowly.

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Until the war of 1914
When the German taught the Turk
How to wipe out the *rayahs* cheaply;
So at first they uprooted the weak members,
Old men and women with children,
They sent them walking into exile
To the confines of Turkey where you will not
Find a hand familiar with the sign of the Cross;
On their shoulders they wore sheepskins,
On their feet felts —
Who of them lived to see those unheard-of highlands?
Snow covered them in the passes,
The dawn-winds turned them to marble:
Thousands of unburied bodies,
Their shrouds and Sunday clothes
Left folded in chests for decent burial.
Whilst their nakedness haunted the ditches.
Little heads, washed and combed each morning
With Easter joy, now by the roots of trees
Laid down by their mothers
Worn out, who pretended
A female beast might come to suckle them.

They gathered the men in slave gangs
To break the pitiless stone;

Their flesh fell in ribbons from beatings,
In ribbons also from the cold.

They died in herds.

Aiee! Roads of Anatolia,
That lead to Armenia,
That lead to Arabia!
Somewhere there are highways planted with poplars,
In other places with laurel, with mulberry-trees
To refresh the traveller in summer
At every breath with the coolness of the leaf:
But your roads, all their length is planted
With upright martyrs' bones.
What remains for the traveller's refreshment?

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So were the villages and communities undone,
Sinking door by door.
Until at the fourth winter
When the wrath began to abate
The fate of Anatolia still weighed in the scales:
The villages asleep in their poplars;
And from the straits of Chios, slowly, slowly,
One by one on the eve of May Day
Ships crept out.

SECOND RECITATIVE

Thus these words blew about, and the highways
Filled with carts,
Inside them all the foremost men of property,
Owners of oil-presses, bakeries, and shops,
And those who wear European trousers:
The villages of brave repute, Vourlâ, Sevdikii,
Koutloutsa,
The *agoras* are humming, vineyards empty, a feast:
Some words bang like gongs
Men's sides tremble like panes of glass
Wherein sing hatreds long pent-up:
Hatreds, like abbesses, not like yesterday's nuns,
For so in those stern homelands is the custom
To make merry and kill easily:
And again the Turks in whitewashed villages dumb,
Even in good times neither word nor flower would offer the traveller.

Only the oxen moo shut in with the women
And the roads leading to Smyrna
Smell of the miracle before it is revealed;
Deserted police-boxes, and deserted café
Where every client had the sigh
Of his fez on the wall where he reclined
And in the stinking Jewish quarter neither Jews
In nightgowns nor Jewesses in clogs:
All had hidden because
They were, as a matter of fact, Greeks:
The ships of this dawn,
Warships and transports full of troops!

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And in their midst '*The Averoff*';
The Christian[s] hail them from the shores —
And how have the women found time
To hang the banners from balcony to balcony
So that with sunrise Smyrna
Is ready to take flight, with all her canvas on?

From the barges the troops land
In heavy equipment; the slabs of the wharves
Split, and at each leap all hearts rejoice:
First come the men of the islands,
From the happy villages of Chîos, Samos and Mytilene;
They had been first called up as green conscripts
For an archipelago division,
But in war they have acquired
Curly moustaches with pointed tips, like wings;
Then comes the Evzone battalion of Roumelli,
Thessaly and the Moraites,
The followers of Gounaris;
Then the Cretan gendarmerie —
The swaying of their hips,
The straightness of their necks
Causes the balconies and windows to melt.
Roses are sprinkled on them
And the bishop in his golden stole
O! Chrystostom, doomed to martyrdom
Stands on a cart to bless them
And his tears stream down.
The soldiers stoop and gather up the roses;
They stop the barrels of their guns —
Ah! but in the barracks, Turks lie in ambush,
Shooting their bullets hit the foremost man,
The standbearer, in the forehead;
As he falls sideways the banner is snatched from him,
As he expires, they uncork the guns;
But there is no time for their roaring
For the crowd swells, and sweeps the barracks clean:
Thus in one morning may little *hanovins*
With plaited hair become
Widows and orphans.

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So that the Turkish quarter be not threatened
The army posted sentries and forbade
Any Christian *rayah* to set foot in it.
Only two inseparable friends, of unlucky fate,
Were charged for theft of a little golden watch
And before their mothers had time to beg a petition,
Before the market opened,
They pinned them to the prison wall,
Two lads, free as mountain deer,
They passed them by, iron bound
Upon a hillside on the way to Brousa;
And side by side, still bound in iron
They buried them together.
Thus there resulted a first unlucky omen.

THIRD RECITATIVE

At the end of summer forests burn:
On that August of 1922 all Anatolia was ablaze.
First in Afion —
The troops threw away their arms
The generals were left with field-glasses in hand
The clamouring Turks fell upon them in the wild:
Golden braid is torn and distributed
No sentries anywhere, scattered regiments run to the sea,
The railway lines sink with the weight,
Men stick on lorries like blight,
And the wounded yell from inside tents,
That they may not abandon them;
Bandaged bodies crawl.
The Greeks run ahead slaying Turks,
The Turks run after them slaying Christians
Wherever they stand the blood drips off their heels
A double carpet.
One country — whom to pity?
The Turks go occupy the mountain caves
The mountains always receive those nearest related
The Christians fall upon the shore
Like quail — with their soul in their lips
The face of the land has changed
Trees bowing with hanged men.

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On the waters float women's hair
And the villages burn slowly by the roads
Like abandoned chalk-kilns.
Then Kemal proclaimed to his troops
To fight and when the soil be clear
Of the wheel-mark of the *ghiaour*
He would cede to them as their bounty
Smyrna and her dog of a Bishop
So all the Christian-haters smell the wind
Kurds and Laz and the tight-girded Tsetes
The Gipsies that sleep with bears:
And before the sorrowful dust of the Greeks
Is cleared they hurl themselves upon them.
Then the order is disturbed
Of all the inanimate by which life hangs,
Houses empty within one morning
The owners take their keys
They give food to the fowl but before night falls
No more of owner, fowl and key.
All those that stayed behind to guard property
Were sacrificed before their open chests,
And soldiers found hiding were tortured.
Archbishop Chrysostom was also arrested
Who would not submit to the minor calamity
Of discarding his robes.
One by one the elders of Smyrna were leaving
In tears after begging him in vain:
He was found alone in his chamber when they took him
To be paraded through the Turkish Quarters.
They pinned him against one wall and another
Pulling his beard and he quivered:
The Turkish women howling from behind grilled windows
Poured boiling oil over him:
At last they tied him legs upward
Behind the horse-cart of a Cretan black:
The black man standing whips the horses;
His head was bouncing on the cobbled street.
On that same night the fire was set going
First and foremost from the Armenian Parish
By spraying petrol through hoses
And the Tsetes running behind with blazing torches.

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The animals without masters were loose
Each kind wailing with its own voice:
And all the lunatics were burned to death and the invalids
Of the Greek hospital unable to get out:
Despite their yelling the Tsetes did not scruple
To loot in this quarter,
Digging therefore in the debris of that spot
Much was found later.
And on the narrow water-front,
With fire behind and water in front of them,
The Christians have no space to stoop;
Standing upright they see all terrors drawing near
Ringing their necks to avoid
The swords whirled by the horsemen.
At the Poonta cemetery they opened the graves
To hide in, but the Turks at dusk
Bend over and softly touching necks
Sort out the young from the old and drag them
In great shame from before their parents' eyes:
They embrace the cypress trees.
The fire burnt for five days,
Its blaze lighted up the cells of Mount Athos,
The smoke unstitched the city in darkness and when the sun rose
There was no more Smyrna in the bay — gone.
Gone the streets with the balconies — the taverns,
The churches and the shops of Fassoulâ,
Merciful launches alongside are sunk:
From the craziness of this land:

At every military cordon men are sorted out
And hidden valuables come to light here:
All the desperate appeals:
Their lives part with one glance.
And those that fell in the sea to swim away
Boys and maidens heading for the men-of-war
Are chased off the gangways with hooks
And scolded in foreign tongues for breaking orders
And spoiling the paint:
They sank uncomprehending.
Thus the shallow waters are cemented by bodies and bundles,
In the open sea gulls peck all that floats

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And the breeze that blows morning and evening
Becomes heavy with the smell of the dead.

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“In Europe: Recitative for a Radio Play”

Lawrence Durrell

“In Europe” was the central poem in Durrell’s 1945 collection *Cities, Plains and People* (although it did not, in fact, appear in *Personal Landscape*). Its *leitmotiv*, “We are getting the refugee habit”, reflects Durrell’s own experiences of exile which had seen him moving from India to England as a child, from England to Corfu as a young man, from Corfu to Athens with the onset of war, and from Greece to Egypt as Germany invaded Greece. This is even suggested by the record of displacement in the poem, “Through Prussia into Russia, / Through Holland into Poland, / Through Rumania into Albania”. And it reflects Durrell’s growing cosmopolitanism, albeit an uncomfortable one: “Now our address is the world”.

From the mid-1930s Durrell shared the general European awareness of impending conflict and, in the wider context, what he saw as the moral and aesthetic collapse of European civilisation. War transcended and abused mere political boundaries and destabilised people’s lives and perceptions.

The dialogue between the Man, the Woman and the Old Man in this “Recitative for a Radio Play” reflects the reiteration of loss: both loss of place and connection and loss of value and meaning. Not only are civilisation and its history disrupted, maybe for ever, but the poem is also a requiem for childhood, for human communication and, indeed, for poetry itself. One thinks of Adorno’s 1949 essay “Cultural Criticism and Society”, in which he states “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”.[1] But, in the context of Greek poetry, we might conversely cite Odysseus Elytis, who pointed to Matisse’s beautiful paintings during the years of Auschwitz and argued, therefore, that modern Greek literature “has made the mistake of competing with the events […] instead of counterbalancing”

[1] This statement has many variations attributed to Adorno, of which “After Auschwitz, what justification can there be for poetry?” is perhaps the best known, although not authenticated.

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them.[2] Certainly Durrell's subsequent writings, in both poetry and prose, took a more positive perspective, "counterbalancing" the black with the white, yet he was always haunted by the prospect of despair and disillusion.

"People and possessions / Lands, rights [...] Mean nothing any more, nothing": so say the speakers in "In Europe". The loss of both personal meaning and treasured possessions, especially land, is at the centre, too, of Papadimitriou's *Anatolia*. In a world which had fallen apart, language itself becomes not merely fragile, but broken: the Man and Woman have only "A jar, a mousetrap, a broken umbrella / A coin, a pipe, a pressed flower"; these are hardly the building blocks of a new life, a new society, yet they are all they have "To make an alphabet for our children".

Durrell's final line "Dear Greece! - Yes, we can die now" sums up the same sense of valediction that we find in Byron's "Fair Greece! Sad relic" (and may well be a deliberate echo), but we must recall that Durrell's friendship with Seferis, starting from their meeting in Athens in 1940 and reflected in their wartime correspondence,3 led to a renaissance of hope for Greece in the post-war period. If modern history succeeds ancient history in a cycle of creation and destruction (as suggested by Seferis's poem "Here Among the Bones") then the sense of reconstruction and resurrection (on which the Greek state was founded) offers some level of persistent hope.

[2] Quoted in V. Calotychos, *Modern Greece: a cultural poetics*, p. 199.
[3] See "Letters to George Seferis, 1940" in L Durrell, *Endpapers and Inklings 1933-1988*, vol. 1, pp. 258-64.

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In Europe
recitatative for a radio play
to Elie

Three Voices to the accompaniment of a drum and bells, and the faint grunt and thud of a dancing bear.

MAN
The frontiers at last, I am feeling so tired.
We are getting the refugee habit,

WOMAN
Moving from island to island,
Where the boundaries are clouds,
Where the frontiers of the land are water.

OLD MAN
We are getting the refugee habit,

WOMAN
We are only anonymous feet moving,
Without friends any more, without books
Or companionship any more. We are getting —

MAN
The refugee habit. There’s no end
To the forest and no end to the moors:
Between the just and the unjust
There is little distinction.

OLD MAN
Bodies like houses, without windows and doors:

WOMAN
The children have become so brown,
Their skins have become dark with sunlight,

MAN
They have learned to eat standing.

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OLD MAN

When we come upon men crucified,
Or women hanging downward from the trees,
They no longer understand.

WOMAN

How merciful is memory with its fantasies.
They are getting the refugee habit. . .

OLD MAN

How weary are the roads of the blood.
Walking forwards towards death in my mind
I am walking backwards again into my youth;
A mother, a father, and a house.
One street, a certain town, a particular place:
And the feeling of belonging somewhere,
Of being appropriate to certain fields and trees.

WOMAN

Now our address is the world. Walls
Constrain us. O do you remember
The peninsula where we so nearly died,
And the way the trees looked owned,
Human and domestic like a group of horses?
They said it was Greece.

MAN

Through Prussia into Russia,
Through Holland into Poland,
Through Rumania into Albania.

WOMAN

Following the rotation of the seasons.

OLD MAN

We are getting the refugee habit:
The past and the future are not enough,
Are two walls only between which to die:
Who can live in a house with two walls?

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MAN
The present is an eternal journey;
In one country winter, in another spring.

OLD MAN
I am sick of the general deaths:
We have seen them impersonally dying:
Everything I had hoped for, fireside and hearth,
And death by compromise some summer evening.

MAN
You are getting the refugee habit:
You are carrying the past in you
Like a precious vessel, remembering
Its essence, ownership and ordinary loving.

WOMAN
We are too young to remember.

OLD MAN
Nothing disturbed such life as I remember
But telephone or telegram,
Such death-bringers to the man among the roses
In the garden of his house, smoking a pipe.

WOMAN
We are the dispossessed, sharing
With gulls and flowers our lives of accident:
No time for love, no room for love;
If only the children —

MAN
Were less wild and unkept, belonged
To the human family, not speechless,

OLD MAN
And shy as the squirrels in the trees:

WOMAN
If only the children

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OLD MAN
Recognized their father, smiled once more.

OLD MAN + WOMAN
They have got the refugee habit,
Walking about in the rain for food,
Looking at their faces in the bottom of wells:

OLD MAN
They are living the popular life.
All Europe is moving out of winter
Into spring with all boundaries being
Broken down, dissolving, vanishing.
Migrations are beginning, a new habit
From where the icebergs rise in the sky
To valleys where corn is spread like butter …

WOMAN
So many men and women: each one a soul.

MAN
So many souls crossing the world,

OLD MAN
So many bridges to the end of the world.
Frontiers mean nothing any more . . .

WOMAN
Peoples and possessions,
Lands, rights,
Titles, holdings,
Trusts, Bonds ...

OLD MAN
Mean nothing any more, nothing.
A whistle, a box, a shawl, a cup,
A broken sword wrapped in newspaper.

WOMAN
All we have left us, out of context,

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OLD MAN
A jar, a mousetrap, a broken umbrella,
A coin, a pipe, a pressed flower

WOMAN
To make an alphabet for our children.

OLD MAN
A chain, a whip, a lock,
A drum and a dancing bear ...

WOMAN
We have got the refugee habit.
Beyond tears at last, into some sort of safety
From fear of wanting, fear of hoping,
Fear of everything but dying.
We can die now.

OLD MAN
Frontiers mean nothing any more. Dear Greece!

MAN
Yes. We can die now.

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Three Poems from *Someone else's life*

Kapka Kassabova

Kapka Kassabova (born 1973) is a poet, novelist and a writer essentially of border-crossings, exploring the conditions of transition, exile, and translation, on both the physical and metaphysical planes. Her novels *Renaissance* (1999) and *Love in the Land of Midas* (2000) were the fictional prelude to two works which describe journeys in body and mind, spirit and heart, between houses, villages and people in locations to which she has a personal affinity, in Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey and Macedonia (both the newly named state of North Macedonia and the region within the Greek border). Border-crossing is, in her *Border: a journey to the edge of Europe* (2017) and its companion, *To the Lake: a Balkan journey of war and peace* (2020), a way of life which is both natural and unnatural, predestined and yet one of choice, determined and yet always perilous. The titles of her poetry, *Someone else's life* (2003) and *Geography for the lost* (2007), indicate the degree of otherness which pervades all her writing, her sense of "spirit of place" which questions the nature of the self, or the sense of self which questions the nature of place. We have chosen "In transit", "Refugees" and "Coming to Paradise" because they resonate within the acoustic articulated by Papadimitriou's and Durrell's recitatives and continue the themes of loss, transition and, possibly, arrival.

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"In transit"

There is a field of frozen mud
and in the middle – a border.
On this side of the border
a pear tree that doesn't bear fruit.
Under the tree an old man
in a borrowed jacket
with a plastic bag,
sitting or kneeling
against the trunk.
The mud has embraced his movements.
The others have gone on with their children.

The border is ten steps away.

"Refugees"

Look: the poverty of rain
Let's gather it in thimbles of patience
then pour it out in the mud

Meanwhile
we'll count all the worlds
to which we'll never go

We must remember – memory is hope.
But quietly, for words can cut out gaps in us
so wide we'd find
too many bodies lying there

Forget, we must forget
the memories – they open up and blossom
like switch-blades in the guts

Look: this is the world we have
Too poor to hide in
Too dark to cross, too single to forget

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"Coming to Paradise"

We came and found paradise but something
was missing in the water, in the sky,
in the movement of hands
that couldn't embrace or punish

Our children have the large
moist eyes of wounded deer
but must betray no sign of weakness
they must be winners or nothing

Our children know all the songs
all the shows all the jokes
they try to learn the memories too
our children are like the rest

It's a sign of fluency to dream in a language
but we dream wide-awake
we think about our dreams
in broken silences

We stand alone and stubborn
we spend years looking for a crack
in the neighbours' wall
but only find a key

We came looking for paradise and paradise
we found, but it wasn't enough
so we wept and talked about leaving
and never left.

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PART SIX:

PERSONAL WITNESS

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The Puppeteer

Mohamad Omari

How can we take anything for granted, when everything around us keeps changing?

The very cup of tea I enjoy today is not the same as the one I enjoyed yesterday or that I will enjoy tomorrow, even if they are supposed to taste the same.

The shoes I wear, are day by day worn-down, the quality brand name will not save them from the destiny of their predecessors.

Cells in our bodies die and perish to give way to new cells that take over, until they too are replaced by younger and stronger cells.

Everything and everyone around us is eventually replaced or expires. Yet, we choose not to see this. We cling on tightly to our lives and to our possessions, as if we believed that, in so doing, we would keep them forever. Some of us have to see spring covered by lava, wheat turn to dust, cities crumble to the ground, before we let go of what is not rightfully ours; a lesson rarely learnt, or remembered.

I left all this behind me when I left Syria three years ago. Or so I believed. I wanted to take none of it with me. I chose to run away from it all, although memories do sometimes hunt me down, camouflaged in a familiar scent, or hiding within the voice of an old friend.

I am now living in Greece. In the North of Greece to be precise. Back where I come from there is a saying: “The apple does not fall far from the apple tree”. This is how I caustically explain my working in a refugee camp as a protection officer for the Arabic speaking residents.

For a refugee to work in a refugee camp, it is both a privilege and a curse. Knowing the impact of your assistance on each refugee's life is a driving force**.** But there is only so much you can do, and it thus becomes a curse,

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when, fully aware of just how grave each refugee's situation is, you are confronted with a Greek Administration that chooses to sit back and let the externally appointed NGOs deal with all camp issues, including acts of aggression and testing incidents caused by dire living conditions, in the face of which you find your hands tied behind your back, unable to do anything substantial, since it is ultimately the Greek State alone that has the authority to act.

I often think of Queen's lyrics "*the show must go on*", as I now mostly put my head down and go into work at the camp five days a week from 9 a.m. to whatever time is required. I perform as best I can, and I ignore what I can. In the beginning, I would take it all to heart. Listening to the refugee stories, as I translated for them, observing how they held back tears, or uttered curses and cries of pain, I would then carry it all back home with me, whipping myself whenever I felt I had let them down; having been unable to make things work for them. But then, I might go back the next day and find myself joyfully moved by children's laughter, or the gratitude someone expressed for the assistance I was in a position to render. Yet again, I had forgotten just how harshly hardships strip people of their human nature and that it makes them call you a traitor or a saviour based on, not your actions, but their own personal gain. And those who bless you with prayers in the morning may be damning you by nightfall.

Nonetheless, I have an advantage over my western colleagues. I can tell what lies behind peoples' masks. I can see beyond their stagy smiles. I can predict the tears, the emotional break down, or even the outbreak of violence. I have seen it all before, and I too have been through it.

When my European colleagues criticise a mother for neglecting her children, what I see is an absent-minded mother, overburdened by a traumatic past with only a hazy future in sight. And when my European colleagues find it surprising to see a man fighting for something as simple (in their point of view) as a broken door handle, or a cheap fan, it is to me entirely understandable, because a man who has lost everything will go through hell to protect whatever little life offers him, regardless of its value.

When you start observing body language, you realise how fascinatingly much it reveals to you. I notice for example, how most of the men in the camp walk in a manner that emits vigour and pride, in an effort to appear bigger than their actual size. The more prominent the walk, the bigger the insecurity they feel, having lost the role they had before leaving their

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country; the role that shaped their identity as Arab, Asian or African males, as providers and protectors of the family.

Now, as war refugees, we must adapt our compasses to follow a new wind; though I do sometimes worry that we are caught in the inescapable rough seas of international political affairs and national interests.

Zakaraya, I find, is a different kind of man. He keeps to himself, he talks little and listens a lot. He always appears calm and he mostly walks with his head down, as if to avoid eye contact with others, preferring the view of the ground. He has not been to my office in search of assistance in the three months since his arrival at the camp, and has not been to any of the other offices either. I do however know a lot about him, as do my colleagues, having access to our strictly confidential online centralised refugee database. I can thus see he is 59 years old, he is married and he has four children, all of whom are alive and with him.

Speaking of children, they too can tell you a lot about the state of mind of their parents. Zakaraya's children for example, are from the very few who attend the non-formal NGO educational program that is offered daily in the camp. They are always showered and carefully groomed, unlike many of the youngsters dressed in dirty old rags playing in the dust in the yard instead of going to school, as if they were homeless – a clear lack of parenting control. I see Jaffar, Zakaraya's eldest son who is today twenty-one years old, being one of the few young men of his age-group who are not involved in drug consumption or dodgy dealings, most often extending to sexual harassment and violence against unaccompanied (and thus unprotected) women (for whom there is a general culture of disapproval by Arab men), and also against the younger boys. The sad reality is that on average, every week, a young man from the camp is arrested by the police; a precarious outcome when you are filled with the youthful desire and impatience to become someone, but you are stuck in a camp with no date in sight, as to when you might be getting out.

On this day, Zakaraya finally decided to visit my office, which is not really an office but a white prefabricated container. It is externally identical to the housing containers the few lucky refugees get to reside in, while a bigger number of them take shelter in the overcrowded tents surrounding the camp. My container is equipped with a desk, a rather comfortable seat

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for myself and a couple of plastic chairs for my visitors, as well as an air conditioner that out of principle I never use, so as to maintain social equality and acceptance by those I am here to serve.

The camp residents are my clients and I am here to respond to their needs, as you would do in customer care. This applies to my colleagues too, though most of them choose to disregard this fact, putting on airs of superiority, adopting a commanding stance and even showing annoyance at the camp residents who approach them, as if they were being disturbed.

I was pleased to see Zakaraya entering my office. He had triggered my interest positively, and I was finally given a chance to uncover more about him. I welcomed him as I always welcome the camp residents. I stood up, shook his hand and invited him to take a seat.

It had taken me some time to create my own borders, caging myself behind bars that would protect me from the refugee stories I get to hear. I have by now mastered the art of showing total emotional absence, something that unnerves most people. You can see they struggle with my expressionless face and my empty eyes staring straight at them, as they recount the darkest moments of their lives and I listen carefully with no judgement or empathy. Sometimes, I sense that my stance makes them try harder to make me engage, but they rarely succeed. As cold and disconnected as I may appear to be, it is my way of helping them, without crumbling to the ground and abandoning the process altogether.

With Zakaraya it was different. It took him seconds to get me out of my shell. I do not know if it was his fatherly figure, his serene tone of voice, or the beautiful sunny weather that morning that made me briefly lower my guard. Carefree as I felt, I asked if he wished to join me for a cup of coffee and of course he did, as it is not in an Arab man's nature to refuse a coffee invitation. As I placed the cups on my desk, I watched him pour nearly the same amount of sugar in his cup as the amount of coffee. Intrigued, I discreetly checked his resident file that was open on my laptop screen, and as I expected, his medical file alerted me to him being a diabetic, in addition to which he suffered from hypertension.

"*Tell me Mr. Zakaraya, what can I do for you?*" Having taken a first sip of coffee, I invited him to speak up. Zakaraya had not come to ask for what are the most common refugee requests, such as a transfer to another camp, wishing to join the limited housing program offered by UNHCR designed to provide shelter only to extremely vulnerable cases, or wanting a taxi to

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get to the hospital. Zakaraya wanted a job.

His request is not entirely uncommon, and I have by now developed a tactic of how to deal with it. I lean forward on my desk to give gravity to the issue at hand. I talk slowly and carefully, as if measuring each word I utter. I want to caution refugee job seekers as to the multiple formal and informal obstacles you face when trying to work in Greece, so that they are well prepared and do not end up disheartened or depressed or giving up entirely. I emphasise the high unemployment rates, I mention the average working conditions and poor wages, due primarily to the austerity measures, and I generally attempt to lower their expectations, before I refer them to the relevant NGO that helps refugees get factory jobs, or seasonal farming work.

However, I had instantly taken a liking to Zakaraya, which is why I did not rush to refer him. Instead, feeling good in his presence and not wanting our conversation to end quite yet, I interviewed him further. I wondered what reasons lay behind him looking for a job, considering his advanced age and the fact that he was still going through the asylum process. I thus enquired about the kind of work he had in mind and whether he would like to tell me more about what he did before he became a refugee. He laughed out loud. "*I'm really not sure you want to know what I did back in the country!*"

It's rare, yet good, to see someone not giving up, but rather treading slowly and carefully over turbulent ground, gradually pushing through the obstacles life and local reality present him with. I sensed Zakaraya was this kind of person, though he may not have believed this of himself. He took two noisy sips of his coffee and chuckled falsely before he continued. "*Job options? You want me to come up with job ideas? Do you really expect me, an old man, who has been in and out of hell, before falling back into it, and is only now blindly looking for a way out, to still expect that life actually has something to offer me?"* And with an ironic grin on his face, he added: "*More calamities and hardships maybe?"*

"*Then why have you come here to me today?*" I asked, pulling him back out of the memories that appeared to have briefly taken hold of him and bringing him back into my refugee container office. He shook his head lightly, as if to brush them away and skipped the apology I could see he both wanted to give, but was also tired of giving.

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"*There is no clear explanation as to why I wish to find a job, but this sense of emptiness is torturing me. I live in the past during the night, I worry about the future during the day, and living in the present is becoming almost impossible. I need something to busy myself with and to keep my brain occupied.*"

This is the regular story I hear. The basic living needs for refugees are covered by the system that has been set up to receive and take care of them *until their future status is determined*. But they still need to keep sane and to keep going. Most find this in work, any kind of work, which is why they don't mind digging the earth or building brick walls, even if they used to be lawyers and doctors back where they come from.

"I get you, Mr Zakaraya. I think you have the right approach and I agree with you; work can heal. A plumber had once told me and taught me this simple life lesson: 'If you can't find a job, ride your bicycle or go for a walk, but get out and about; move and mingle with people and you will see how things work themselves out, because movement is life.'"

"*And did you ever follow his advice?*" Zakaraya asked half-heartedly, as if tired of hearing encouraging statements that do not however get him out of his current situation.

"*Actually no, I did not, because while I worked for him during that summer school break, I was desperately trying to save up to buy myself a bicycle, and then the bastard never paid me!*" A twinkle in Zakaraya's eye told me I had now managed to break the ice. We now spoke the same language. We understood each other. We had both experienced empty promises … yet, something kept us going.

"*Nevertheless, you claim that he taught you a valuable life lesson*" Zakaraya pointed out, inviting me to explain further.

"*He taught me two life lessons, not just one. Firstly, he taught me to keep moving and secondly, to never trust an employer who delays to pay wages.*" I could see Zakaraya was now fully engaged in our talk. "*So, tell me Zakaraya, what can you do? I mean what are your professional skills?*"

He leaned back in his chair and he was quite clearly struggling to remember the various manual or handyman jobs he mentioned, each one accompanied by the word apprentice or assistant. "*Okay Zakaraya. I must stop you there. I assume you are listing jobs you did when you were a*

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young man, like thirty or forty odd years ago, right?" His nod was forthcoming. "*That's fine. That's a starting point. But tell me, what is it that you had been doing in let's say the last twenty years before the war, that paid the family bills?*" His hesitation made me dream up a dozen or so embarrassing job titles, including a pimp, a rubbish collector and a street artist.

Zakaraya: "*I do not believe that what I was doing will be helpful in any way.*"

Me: "*What makes you think that?*"

Zakaraya: "*I was a Hakawati.*[1] *What can you make of that?*"

Me: "*Am I to believe that I am sitting chatting to a* relic *from the past? Honestly, I am such a huge admirer of Hakawati! I am only sorry that there is so little done to preserve our heritage and culture in the Middle East.*"

Zakaraya: "*Tell me about it*" he said, lowering his gaze to the dust-filled floor.

Me: "*But it's never too late, is it? Or so they say. So, why don't we try and bring it back to life Mr Zakaraya?*" I was suddenly filled with a long lost enthusiasm. "*What do you say?*" I urged him on, wanting him to share in my genuine excitement. "*I have personally never seen a Hakawati perform, but have always been fascinated by their stories, by the way my grandmother conveyed them to me. One thousand and one nights, The man eating the one eyed ogre, The story of the phoenix … these are legendary heroes appearing in myth and folklore. Disconnecting today's young generations from their heritage, due to pointless wars, is a crime! They will be left with an even bigger cultural gap and identity conflict! The more you see your profession as useless, the more I disagree with you.*"

A more reserved and softly spoken Zakaraya responded: "*I will not argue that there is benefit in keeping these stories alive and oral transmission is*

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1 A hakawati is a teller of tales, legends and fables; a storyteller, a performer, and someone who earns his living by fascinating and captivating an audience with his tales. Source: https://en.annahar.com/article/705184-the-hakawati-a-revival-of-an-ancient-tradition#:~:text=The%20word%20%E2%80%9Chakawati%E2%80%9D%20is%20a,an%20audience%20with%20his%20tales.

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a very special way of doing so. However, your utopian outlook is really not compatible with our current reality." He paused, he picked up his cup of coffee, stirred it, stared at it, but took no sip before placing it back down on the table. "*You may not be aware that I recently received a positive response to my asylum application. To all intents and purposes this is good news. Nonetheless, it also means that within a month my family and I will be exempted from all the services provided to us by the state, including shelter and cash assistance. In view of a limited integration program and a lack of vocational training, I really don't see how my family and I will make do until we receive documents allowing us to travel. And even then, if we make it to another European country, once again, we will be putting our fate in God's hands.*"

His fears were well founded and fully justified. I knew that no kind words could ease the pain in his heart. I did not want to present empty promises, and yet I could somehow see a real potential in his art. "*Listen Mr Zakaraya, I will not argue with you. But I could very well be right and you'll never know, unless you try. Isn't that so? Why don't you give it a try, just for one week, while you're waiting for the Agency to find you daywork or something more permanent? I have a plan in mind. It might just work.*"

A little disbelieving and a little curious, Zakaraya caught on: "*Alright, I am listening.*"

Me: "*Firstly, I will get in touch with the person responsible for the child-friendly space. I'm sure you could be useful to him. Then we will organise a storytelling event linked to awareness-raising amongst Arabic speaking refugees to which we will invite various representatives of refugee agencies and organisations, through whom I strongly believe we can get you back into business. So, what do you say?*"

Zakaraya: "*I say you reminded me of a story.*"

Me: "*Please, tell me about this story.*"

Zakaraya: "*It is a short one. It tells the tale of a Bedouin prince who ruled over desert land. For some time, he had been hearing travellers who crossed his territory talk with great admiration about an immensely beautiful young woman who worked as a gardener in a far away kingdom amongst the impenetrable Atlas mountains. The fame of her beauty, spread by the travellers, had taken international proportions. Hearing so much talk about her, the prince became enthralled by the idea of her, to the point that he began to lose both his appetite for food and for sleep. He*

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eventually made up his mind to go on the long journey over the dangerous mountain-pass that would bring him to her garden and see for himself. When he arrived, he discovered that she was in actual fact more beautiful than he could have ever imagined. He asked her to marry him. She neither accepted nor refused. She handed him a bag full of flower seeds and asked him to plant them in his lands; when they blossomed, he was to come back for her. Perplexed, the prince said: "but flowers don't grow in the desert!" She smiled and replied: "then how do you expect my heart to dwell in yours?"

After a moment's silence, I disappointingly uttered: "*That's it?*"

Zakaraya: "*Let's just say I spare you some futile details.*"

Me: "*Well, it's a well told, thought-provoking story, regardless of the missing parts. But, what the girl fails to see, in my opinion, is that the desert has its own magic. If only for example you take the brightness of the stars that appear so much closer to the dark sandy dunes, compared to the mountain tops mostly concealed under the thick clouds. So, I would suggest, Mr Zakaraya, that you choose not to be that flower seed that only blossoms in the mountains, but that you become a cactus and you survive even where there is no water.*"

The moment Zakaraya exited my office, the crowd waiting outside my door, shouting and yelling and calling for attention, flooded in. The incessant flow of people in need made that day at the camp pass in a flash. At the end of one yet-again-challenging day, I shut and locked the door, taking a moment to compose myself. As I sat at my desk, even though I was now alone and the crowds had dispersed, I could still hear their screams. Screaming at me, hoping to be heard. Screaming out of fear. Screaming while dodging bullets being fired at them. Screaming while dragging limbless bodies from under the rubble of the explosion. Screaming with fear at the wild winter waves of the Aegean, when sitting on a rubber boat crossing the sea into Greece … supposedly into safety. I could hear them screaming at me, over and over again, desperate to be heard. I placed my little pink buddha on the desk, I took a good look at him and then I mimicked his peaceful posture, hoping to recover some peace and positive energy.

Ten days later, Zakaraya was centre-stage in the small make-shift theatre the maintenance team had managed to put together. He was surrounded by what must have been the entire refugee camp population. He was dressed

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in a long beige robe, a red scarf hanging loosely off his shoulder and a tarbush on his head. It was exactly how I had pictured the Hakawati from my grandmother's descriptions. With his opening line, he already had the full attention of the younger children. The older children and teenagers were pretending not to pay attention, but you could see his words touching some special little chord in them too. The elders were equally keen on his performance, possibly remembering their less turbulent younger years. It was almost sunset. The weather was ideal both in temperature and clarity of the sky. In the silence that befell, no sound was to be heard other than Zakaraya's mesmerising voice.

It was the first time I would enjoy such a peaceful moment at the camp. I too listened on attentively and only by chance did I at some point catch Zakaraya's gaze, a big wide smile drawing on his face. He was radiating, because he had found himself. For a moment, his joy shined over his trauma's darkness; but it was a brief moment, since light cannot survive in utter darkness.

Zakaraya was soon to set up business as a Hakawati, working for both local and foreign NGOs in the camp's various awareness-raising projects. But he never made enough money to be self-sustained by the handful of shows he was asked to perform. His arteries gave him trouble and some medical issues reduced his mobility, severely preventing him from taking on any of the few job opportunities available to refugees, which require physical strength. He eventually made it to Germany, where he applied for asylum, which was initially rejected, based on the Dublin Convention and is currently awaiting the result of his appeal; a fate he shares with thousands of others who have similarly been left aside by the system and left to fend for themselves. It is the screams of these people that I incessantly hear, day and night.

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CROSSING BORDERS IN HAUDENOSAUNEE TERRITORY

SCOTT MANNING STEVENS

While the crossing of international borders can be seen as transgressive at specific moments and in certain regions, it is rarely regarded as activism in its own right, but for the Haudenosaunee people of North America it is often just that. Every third Saturday in July, since 1928, Haudenosaunee citizens have crossed the United States-Canada border at Niagara Falls as an assertion of Indigenous Rights (Image 1). Who are the Haudenosaunee? We are an Indigenous nation more familiar to Europeans by our French name, the *Iroquois*. The Haudenosaunee, literally "the People of the Long House", are a loosely confederated Indigenous polity originally consisting of five nations bound together by a common culture and linguistically interrelated communities.[1] The French would call these nations collectively *les Iroquois*, while the British knew them as the Five Nations; and after 1713, with admission of the Tuscarora into the Confederacy, the Six Nations. From a research perspective these nations are represented under a daunting number of subject headings. When an interested party turns to the archive, he/she will find a cacophony of exonyms and transliterations which will doubtless prove challenging. We have the Iroquois, the Iroquois League, the Iroquois Confederacy, the Five Nations, the Six Nations, and the Haudenosaunee; beyond that our constituent nations, from east to west, are the Mohawk (my mother's people), the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora. Originally, our homelands were in the area today known as upstate New York, between the Hudson Valley in the east and Lake Erie in the west, just under 650 kms across.

[1] Dean Snow, *The Iroquois: The People of the Longhouse.*

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Image 1

The Haudenosaunee concept of our geographic space is the presiding metaphor of our political culture. The great *longhouse*, in which we dwelt, was imagined "to extend its rafters from east to west". This metaphor derived from the multi-family dwellings that made up Haudenosaunee villages through our territories (Image 2). Living together in such a dwelling required exacting codes of social behaviour and a civil compact to maintain a harmonious co-existence – so with an individual longhouse, similarly with the larger metaphoric one that represented the confederacy. The Mohawks were designated "Keepers of the Eastern Door" and with the Onondagas the "Keepers of the Central Fire", and the Seneca as the "Keepers of the Western Door". The Onondagas have the honour of serving as the council fire keepers not only because of the central location of their territories in the Confederacy but because they were the last of the original five nations to accept the Great Law of Peace. And their acceptance of that code is said to have occurred along the shores of Onondaga Lake, thenceforward sacred to the Haudenosaunee.

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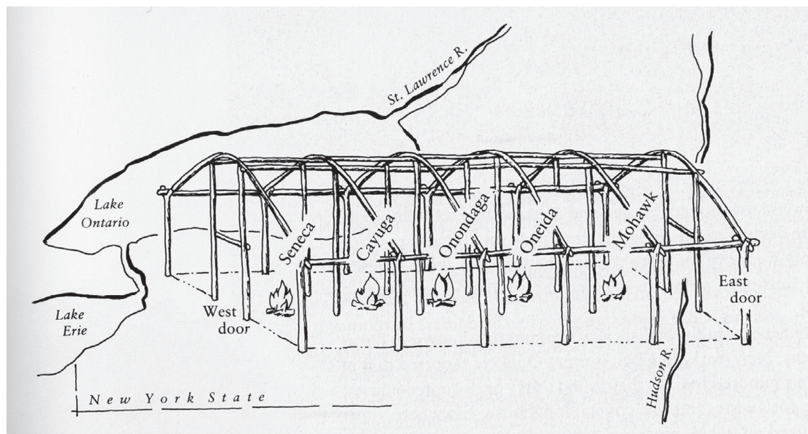
Image 2



The lake is sacred to us for its cultural history; it was on its waters that the Peacemaker steered his stone canoe to reach the last holdout against his message of peace.[2] In the telling of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's founding we learn that in ancient times our peoples fought bitter wars against each other, and life was a constant struggle between warring factions. It was at that low point in our collective history that the Peacemaker and his helper, Ayonhwathah (Hiawatha), travelled between the nations spreading the message of peace. After a Seneca woman, Jigonhsasee, thereafter called the "Mother of Nations", who had once supported the warriors, accepted the Great Law of Peace, the three of them were able to unify the Mohawk, the Seneca, the Oneida, and the Cayuga under the Great Law but not the Onondaga, whose territories sat in the midst of the Five Nations. They were under the influence of Thadodaho, a malevolent shaman who swore enmity to all those seeking peace. When the Peacemaker reached him on the shores of Onondaga Lake, he was able to sway his "bad mind" and persuade him to take up the course of peace. Since that period, we have been bound by a common destiny and a common culture. Though each nation retains its own closely related language and unique form of governance, we view each other as a family of six nations. That is a very fast and loose overview of our Confederacy, but it should serve to make clear that we are an ancient nation with a

[2] For a more detailed version of this history, see: Paul. A. W. Wallace, *The White Roots of Peace: The Iroquois Book of Life.*

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strong sense of identity, even though our population is split between two nation states.

During the days of the Confederacy's ascendancy, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, we policed no internal borders among ourselves. We knew our territories and respected those of others, but with the advent of European imperialism and the establishment of the colonies of New France, New Netherland, and New England, suddenly the Haudenosaunee were surrounded by borders. These colonial borders shifted frequently and in the case of the Dutch and French would disappear as British conquest eventually secured their hegemony over much of North America.[3] Still, the Haudenosaunee retained our independent homelands right up until the conclusion of the American War for Independence. The history that created the U.S./Canadian border is one from which Haudenosaunee people could not escape. Many members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had allied with the British during the American Revolution with the assurance that their sovereignty would be acknowledged in perpetuity after the Americans were defeated.[4] That fateful alliance meant the dispossession of thousands of Haudenosaunee communities at the conclusion of that struggle – including most of my Mohawk ancestors.

As a consolation the British offered land in Ontario to Mohawks and others, leaving the now conquered Haudenosaunee homelands in what would become the State of New York. The majority of Mohawks were exiled to territories in Canada and those other Haudenosaunee nations who remained in the U.S. were now reduced to very small reservations. We went from having free run of our territories in 1776 to being exiled or compressed to reservations in 1788. Our world had suddenly become a world of borders; with the issue of the international border between the United States and British Canada a major sticking point for Haudenosaunee people from its inception. Our citizens were divided roughly in half, between the United States and Canada, and extended family relations now found themselves in separate countries. Britain and the U.S. tried to address this problem in the 1794 Jay Treaty on Trade and Intercourse between the two countries, dictating that Native peoples could pass the border without interference.[5]

Several hundred of those same Natives living in Ontario would join the British again, this time under General Brock, fighting the American

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[3] See Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization.*

[4] Snow, pp. 141-157.

[5] Caitlin Smith, "The Jay Treaty Free Passage Right in Theory and Practice".

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invasion of Canada in 1812. The international border along the Niagara River has remained fixed since the Treaty of Ghent concluded the war in 1814. Part of those peace negotiations concerned the rights of Indigenous people, the Haudenosaunee in particular, to cross the border unimpeded. The Treaty of Ghent was in effect a re-ratification of the previous Jay Treaty of 1794 between the United States and Britain and had placed the international border at the Niagara River. Given that this border conforms to a natural feature of the land, it is easy to recognise and conceive of as a border, but in other regions no such natural feature existed to mark the abstract notion of an international border cutting through Indigenous territories.

To my people, even today, the Jay Treaty is far from obscure. Along with settling the border and establishing the terms of peaceful trade it contained a provision in the third article relating directly to native people. It reads: "No duty of entry shall ever be levied by either party on peltries [animal skins retaining their fur] brought by land or inland navigation into the said territories respectively, nor shall the Indians passing or repassing with their own proper goods and effects of whatever nature, pay for the same any impost or duty whatever." This passage has long been understood to grant free passage between the two nation states to Native peoples. Both nation states largely ignored the terms of the treaty as it related to Indigenous peoples throughout the nineteenth century. These were dark times for the Natives of North America in general. Boarding schools and forced assimilation were the rule on both sides of the border, and the passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act in1887 marked what then appeared to be the end of the reservation system and the last vestiges of Native sovereignty. Within this context an eighteenth-century treaty guaranteeing the rights of Natives when crossing the border was bound to be forgotten.

It took a remarkable figure from the Tuscarora Nation, Clinton Rickard, to bring the issue of the border in from the margins and make it central to American Indian self-determination. Rickard had been aware of the issue of the Jay Treaty and its import for Haudenosaunee people since the struggles between the Cayuga orator Deskaheh (Levi General) representing Six Nations, and the Canadian government in the early decades of the twentieth century.[6] During and after the first world war Deskaheh defended the sovereign rights of the Haudenosaunee living on Canadian reserves. His struggle would take him to the court officials of George V in London and the League of Nations in Geneva on a tribally

[6] Joëlle Rostkowski, "The Redman's Appeal for Justice at the League of Nations".

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authorised passport, but he would ultimately fail to gain enough support for his cause. Deskaheh retreated to the home of Clinton Rickard on the Tuscarora reserve in 1924 when he was refused re-entry to his home in Canada; he would die on the Tuscarora reservation that same year, while urging Rickard to attend to the border issue — which he referred to as "fighting for the line". It would not be long before the border came up again. 1924 was also the year of the passage of the U.S.'s xenophobic Immigration Act (primarily designed to keep out Asians) and in 1925 Paul Diabo, a Kahnawake Mohawk from Québec was arrested in Philadelphia as an illegal alien. Diabo claimed that as a North American Indian he had the right to be in the United States under provisions of the Jay Treaty. Rickard, remembering the words of Deskaheh, came to the aid of Diabo by establishing the Indian Defense League in 1926.[7] Paul Diabo won his case and the border was subsequently declared open to members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in both nation states.

Beginning in July of 1928 the Indian Defense League marked this legal victory and the reaffirmation of the terms of the Jay Treaty with its annual Border Crossing Celebration. As a child I remember going to Niagara Falls to cross the bridge with other Native people in the area. Chief Rickard lived to be eighty-nine years old and was still involved when I was a child in the 1960s. By that time Haudenosaunee had yet again lost precious acreage to the St. Lawrence Seaway project and the Niagara Power project in the 1950s. The Indian Defense League had attempted to block these projects and would later sue for compensation for annexed Indian land. These were also the days of the Civil Rights Movement and social upheaval, though still a few years shy of the founding of the American Indian Movement or AIM, at the end of the decade. Native peoples were still expected to conform to a specific image created by the dominant culture. Since the defeat of Indigenous peoples during the course of the nineteenth century, settler society was not accustomed to Native people as political activists. The Border Crossing celebrations were both celebratory and defiant. Political quiescence and obedience were what was expected of Indigenous people. Settler Americans had long ago embraced our supposed "vanishing" and in the early twentieth century they impatiently waited for news of our actual extinction. The Border Crossing "demonstration" in 1928 – in New York State nonetheless – would have been a surprise. The only Indians supposed to be left were out West, surely not in one of the original thirteen colonies.

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[7] Barbara Graymont (ed.), *The Fighting Tuscarora: The Autobiography of Chief Clinton Rickard*.

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Our persistence within our native region has always confounded those who insisted our cultures were too assimilated, too intermarried, and too weak to continue to exist in the present.

The annual Border Crossing continues, although the Indian Defense League has been superseded by more radical political action groups. In its heyday it was not only an invaluable advocacy organisation but also a social focal point for the hundreds of Haudenosaunee people like my grandparents who had left the reservation to find employment in factories or as steel workers. It was at an Indian Defense League social in Niagara Falls, New York, that my grandparents met, and I still recall the black and white photographs of them dancing. My grandmother described the League as providing encouragement and solidarity at a time when standing up to either nation state's federal government was almost unthinkable for most Native people. She recalled meetings at people's homes and taking comfort in the fact that there were other Indians in the city who could offer each other mutual aid if need be. I find satisfaction in the paradox that the very problem of the border brought so many Indigenous people together.

This is not to say that the border does not continue to remain problematic for Native peoples — far from it. We need only look at the border drawn through the Akwesasne Mohawk reservation to find a situation symbolic of the whole problem with borders in *Iroquoia*. This particular border divides the reserve not into two parts but three. Located on the confluence of the St. Regis and the St. Lawrence Rivers, Akwesasne is divided among the federal governments of Canada and the United States and the state and provincial governments of Québec, Ontario and New York State. Unlike the border at the Niagara River where there are several reservations on either side, the international border at Akwesasne actually cuts through the reservation. One can literally step from Canada to the United States and from Québec to New York. The topography is further complicated by the presence of the two rivers and dozens of islands. From the perspective of federal border patrol agents, it is a locus of illegal trafficking of goods and people. Post-9/11 has meant an increasingly militarised presence on both sides of the international divide. Clearly, it is treated as a site of national anxiety.

As the twentieth century progressed, so did opportunities for intertribal activism such as those championed by Indians of All Tribes and the American Indian Movement. And just as Deskaheh had turned to the League of Nations in the early 1920s, other Haudenosaunee leaders would use the international stage to fight for Indigenous rights. It had become clear to many that there was little pressure that could be leveraged against

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the U.S. or Canadian governments in the 1960s. What did seem to matter was international reputation and the appearance of a just society. Everyone knew the Indians got a raw deal in North America, but it had not been made newsworthy until a variety of national political actions brought it to the attention of newspaper and television audiences. Such events as the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 or the stand-off at Wounded Knee in 1973 put Native American civil rights into the larger story of civil rights in the United States. But Haudenosaunee activists wanted the world's attention and believed that the United Nations was the appropriate forum, and so in 1977 they joined a large number of other Indigenous representatives from both North and South America and journeyed to a forum hosted by the non-government organisations of the United Nations in Geneva. Remembering Deskaheh's earlier journey, the Haudenosaunee delegation chose to travel on their own Haudenosaunee issued passports (Image 3), knowing that they might be refused entry into Switzerland since the Haudenosaunee were not a recognised nation by the United Nations and the delegation's members lived in both Canada and the United States.

Image 3

This was international travel as activism. The delegation would test international law and the Swiss authorities could test the delegation's resolve. In the end, the Swiss, reasoning the implications of their national neutrality, allowed the Haudenosaunee entrance to their confederacy. Once in Geneva the delegation had the opportunity to join with other Native nations and make their collective positions known. Indigenous peoples of

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the western hemisphere represent a tremendous amount of cultural and geographic diversity, each nation with its own history and traditions, but under settler colonial rule we all share the effects of this cataclysmic system of rule. The values expressed by that delegation in 1977 are ably recorded in their account of that journey titled *basic call to consciousness*.[8] This slim volume of 117 pages still expresses the values and aspirations of many in our respective communities, and our leaders still practice travel as activism every time they undertake an international journey using our own passport. Such was the case in November of 1980 in Rotterdam, when the Netherlands hosted the Fourth Russell Tribunal to hear cases against the ethnocide of Indigenous peoples from the around the world.[9] Representing the Haudenosaunee was Faithkeeper, Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation. He travelled to the Netherlands on his Haudenosaunee passport and was granted entry so that he might speak about the continued attacks endured by the Haudenosaunee in the late twentieth century – these days through continued land dispossession, social inequity resulting from systemic racism, and pressures from state and local governments to conform to majority society oversight.

The passport issue has remained a flashpoint in international travel for decades. Native Americans were not considered citizens of the United States until 1924 with the passage of the American Indian Citizenship Act, and it was only then that they qualified for a U.S. passport. Citizenship was by no means universally welcome among Native people; for many it meant forced inclusion in an enemy colonising nation state. Most Indigenous people had resisted United States rule and many still tenaciously clung to what sovereignty remained for our reservations. Citizenship would seem to annul such claims to Indigenous sovereignty while providing a limited voice in U.S. politics; the act had not granted universal suffrage to Native peoples, which was decided on a state-by-state basis up until 1957, with some states barring Native voting. To carry a Haudenosaunee passport, then, is an act of defiance and a proactive claim about our own international sovereignty. This is frequently tested by larger more powerful states such as the United Kingdom in 2010, when it refused to allow the Iroquois Nationals lacrosse team to participate in the World Lacrosse Cup, that year hosted by the British. Even with considerable cross-Atlantic diplomatic negotiations, the Iroquois Nationals

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[8] See *basic call to consciousness*, ed. Akwesasne.

[9] *Archive of the Fourth Russell Tribunal: On the rights of the Indians of the Americas* (*Archivo del Cuarto Tribunal Russell: sobre los derechos de los pueblos indígenas de las Américas*).

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were forced to default their games.[10]

Canada likewise has refused to acknowledge the Haudenosaunee passport and has even been known to seize the item when it is presented at the U.S./Canadian border, under the notion that it is a "fantasy document".[11] Haudenosaunee people experience such harassment with alarming frequency whenever we cross the borders which separate our homelands and communities. We continue to assert our sovereignty whenever we travel on the Confederacy-issued passport and we continue to suffer the consequences of that action. Such travel has become a form of political praxis, it is done with the knowledge that it might result in being barred entry or even temporary incarceration. In 2010 Kahnawake Mohawks from a reserve outside of Montréal had travelled to Bolivia to participate as part of the Mohawk delegation in the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. Their planned ten-day visit turned into a twenty-nine day international ordeal because Canada would not allow them to return to their home reserve because they had travelled on their Haudenosaunee passports.[12] With increasing anxiety over the free movement of peoples around the globe, we do not expect our situation to become any easier but as long as the border imposed on us remains, we shall be crossing it.

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[10] Thomas Kaplan, "Iroquois Defeated by Passport Dispute".

[11] Gale Courey Toensing, "Canadian Border Agent Confiscated Haudenosaunee Passport".

[12] Greg Horn, "Canada Prevents Mohawks from Returning Home on their Haudenosaunee Passports".

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A PAGE FROM *TOTAL BALKANS: ONE WOMAN'S SEARCH FOR JUSTICE IN KOSOVO*

BLANKA ČECHOVÁ

Total Balkans *by Blanka Čechová is a story set in war-torn and divided Kosovo, a world divided between Albanian Kosovans and Serbian Kosovans. Her protagonist, a lawyer working for one of the international missions, asks: "Does democratisation make sense? And does an individual have any chance to make a difference inside a huge organisation?" She witnesses crushing injustice, survives a line of unexpected adventures, disillusions and doubts, and finally becomes the black sheep inside the organisation and the hero of local people, who realise that somebody finally cares. Čechová's caustic and cynical humour reveals a blistering account of peacekeeping in practise, and the ineffectual attempts of international organisations. The following extract poses the key questions – and the evasive answers – which sum up the jurist's dilemma.*

"It's fall 2007. Most of Kosovo's territory is inhabited by Albanians — nearly the entire area south of the Ibar River, which divides Mitrovica into north and south, is theirs. At the same time, everything north of the Ibar River and all the way up to the border with Serbia is populated by Serbs. If Kosovo declares independence within its geographic border, i.e. including the dominantly Serbian north, it will incite lasting problems, unrest, and a space for new ethnic conflict to erupt in the future.

"Question: From the perspective of law, stability, and peace, which one of the following solutions would you consider right and sustainable?

- Declare independence within the geographic border no matter what. Ignore the northern Serbs, their land, and their rights entirely. Who's stopping them from converting to Islam and learning Albanian? Otherwise, they might want to finally move out or become extinct. Secure lasting peace through a

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permanent military presence. Over and out.

- Divide Kosovo. Draw border through the Ibar river. Let the territory south of the river become the independent state of Kosovo. May the territory north of the river either stay with Serbia or, for all we care, proclaim independence of its own.
- Declare Kosovo within its geographic border as the fifty-first US state and fulfil the dream of Ibrahim Rugova, the late passive resistance leader.
- Choose a sufficiently stale and meritorious tottery diplomat on the threshold of grave or Alzheimer's and assign him to draft the Twenty-Eight Key Recommendations on the Resolution of the Current Political Situation in Kosovo. Let him read the headings of chapters at a summit in Geneva and award him the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Do nothing. Agree with a KFOR[1] general who said that the problem of the Serbian minority in Kosovo will be settled biologically, by means of natural selection, as the inevitable population expansion of Albanians simply crowds out the less potent minorities. Why the hell don't they draft a split up? Yeah, every divided city is a sad story, but Mitrovica has been de facto split for the past ten years of UN rule anyway.

When I try to broach the topic, Arthur just dishes out a sequence of peculiar smiles, as if saying, "We are not even allowed hints, darling, but eventually you'll figure it all out on your own." But what, Arthur, what? Does this really concern just the plot of land inhabited by eighty thousand people who'll never recognize Kosovo as their state? Or is there something more? An oil pipeline scheduled to run through northern Kosovo? A secret diamond mine hidden out there? Elvis Presley? Why can't anyone just give me an explanation? Whatever the reason, the division of Kosovo becomes a hermetically isolated taboo; it gets crossed off the list of solutions and locked in the tower like a rebel princess. And, try as I might, I simply can't get why.

[1] The 28-nation NATO Kosovo-Force.

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"WHERE WILL YOU BE AFTER ONE YEAR AND A HALF AS A REFUGEE?": LINGUISTIC BORDERS AND BUREAUCRATIC MAZES

SANDRA MATEUS AND PAULO SANTOS

Introduction

Five years have passed since asylum applications in Europe reached their peak with a registered number of 1.3 million requests in 2016. Since then, there's been a consistent remission of the influx. While numbers might contribute to a political rhetoric claiming that the so-called *European migrant crisis* has come to an end, the critical scenarios regarding asylum seekers and refugees are far from being over.

After a challenging journey, in host countries, forced migrants must not only overcome linguistic and bureaucratic obstacles, but also deal with the inefficiency of organisations in providing support, which demonstrates how highly bureaucratised systems act as a further frontier that refugees must somehow cross. In the effort to do so, forced migrants have to wait years in a condition of statelessness and disempowerment, in order to have the right to be more than a stranger. Such state of abeyance is socially produced and constitutes a significant dimension within power structures.

In this chapter, we shall focus on the obstacles and challenges faced by forced migrants and how welcoming practices and integration policies of hosting countries generate further barriers and borders. Drawing from the results of fourteen semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers and refugees hosted in Lisbon, we outline and explore linguistic boundaries and bureaucracy as state-generated borders. This study is part of a greater body of research within the framework of the PandPAS project (Mateus et al., 2019).

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Borders as inequality reproduction mechanisms

Closing borders has been a political measure of control frequently applied by Western nations, to contain the emergence of phenomena closely related to processes of globalisation and their effects.

Between 2014 and 2019, Europe was challenged with an influx of refugees and asylum seekers, while 2020 kicked off with the spread of COVID-19, leading to a global pandemic. In both cases, the enforcement of borders, together with the set-up of assessment mechanisms, served as a strategy to deal with a “threat”. However, though the latter has proven to be a great risk to global society with a total of 1.1 million deaths so far (WHO, 2020), the same cannot be said for the former. In fact, the erection of borders has only aggravated the so-called *European refugee crisis* as the recorded deaths of 32,516 migrants in the Mediterranean Sea (IOM, 2020) testify, for instance.

Governments, particularly those where nationalist-populistic discourse gained momentum, have demonstrated who is to be protected and who is not, distinguishing between the “civilised” and the “savage” and drawing a boundary separating “us” from “them”. The predisposition to adopt such an approach is upheld by a constructed cultural imaginary of the Other and can be defined as *a necropolitical stratification and selection of who can be left to die* (Mbembe, 2003) by those who exercise sovereignty and restrict access to fundamental domains of integration such as healthcare, employment and education.

Borders and boundaries aren’t so different in their substance, if there’s any difference at all. Borders are usually referred to as a line separating nations from one another, while boundaries are considered as the limit or edge of something, either real or imagined. When juxtaposed, though, definitions get blurred as we soon come to realise that borders are a product of political (dis)agreements to settle where one territory ends and the other begins. This is especially the case once we realise that there is no such thing as a natural, real border. Borders are strictly symbolic and can only be seen in world maps or perceived by the presence of national authorities and surveillance architectures built at designated coordinates. Thus, *borders are first and foremost imaginary, a social artefact, product of intersubjectivity*.

In the wake of 2015’s migrant influx and subsequent years, media channels and political institutions were prompt to frame the phenomenon as a crisis that was striking Europe. From a statistical point of view, it’s arguably difficult to classify the European scenario as critical since out of the first ten countries with the greatest share of refugees per 1,000

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inhabitants, only two were European: Sweden, holding 7th place with twenty-five refugees, and Malta, in 9th place with twenty refugees. Meanwhile, Lebanon and Jordan headed the list with 156 and 72 refugees respectively (UNHCR, 2019).

What's being called into question is whether twentyfirst-century societies are still supposed to face global crises as local phenomena and if worldviews are still meant to be Eurocentric. All the more so if globalisation is seriously considered one of the main traits of present-day society.

The social production of internal borders

Borders are created through processes that involve not only spatial and social but also temporal dimensions. The dimension of temporality is observable, for instance, through the duration (expansion or contraction) of legal and administrative procedures related to the regularisation and integration of forced migrants.

So far we've seen that there's a double standard when it comes to crossing borders. It's acceptable that thousands of tourists safely arrive by plane to our country every day. On the other hand, though, it's unconvincing to grant migrants, coming from war-torn countries, the possibility to start a new life in our territory. Nevertheless, we keep on failing to recognise the moral fallouts of such mindset since our judgment is often shadowed by the ideology of the Law, a *prescription of reasonable order* (Badiou, 2012) which designates what's normal and what's forbidden.

In order to navigate the host countries' "reasonable order", forced migrants face a number of complex processes, part of what B S Turner designates as an immobility regime, "exercising surveillance and control over migrants, refugees and other aliens" (2007: 289). Governments enclose and immobilise migration flows through legal and bureaucratic barriers.

Governmentality is the generic term that designates these micro-power relations whereby bodies are controlled by the state through local institutions and authorities. It has been defined as "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target populations" (Burchell [Foucault], 1991: 102).

Over a century ago, Georg Simmel claimed that the stranger, as a sociological category, is not to be considered in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow (1908). Another important contribution to what is today a vast literature about the stranger was Werner Sombart's *Modern Capitalism* (1902). For Sombart immigrants are

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bearers of innovation, thanks to their specific personality traits. Having departed from his old habits and relationships, the stranger finds himself in a desolate land without a past. In his brave new world, there's only the future and every social interaction is meant to be instrumental, except for the members of his own community, with whom he shares the same adventure (Sombart, 1902). The fact that the hosting community doesn't recognise any sort of citizenship in the stranger, gives rise to a moral indifference between him and society, leading to a moral degradation which is often at the basis of violent acts towards this category.

From a social phenomenological standpoint, Schütz (1971) focusses on those cases in which the newly arrived is willing to be part of the local community and analyses the cultural obstacles that he has to face during the integration process. Under such circumstances, the stranger's social and cultural experiences create a cognitive maze due to the unsuitableness of his old reference schemes in the new context. His thinking as usual doesn't seem to provide the necessary tools to overcome the challenges posed by social interactions with the new group. Ultimately, this inability to access the new world is seen by natives as a lack of will to adhere to the norms and values of local culture.

One fundamental trait that is particularly representative of today's subjects of forced migration[1] is an intrinsic uncertainty regarding the present and the future. The only certainty that forced migrants have is their past, but even that will be often called into question in their daily self-presentation, especially when claiming asylum. In fact, forced migrants often have to wait years in a condition of statelessness and disempowerment, in order to achieve the right to be more than a stranger.

Waiting is a significant dimension in power structures. As stated by Khosravi (2014), it is "a common feature of bureaucracy (…) Keeping others waiting is also a technique for the regulation of social interactions. It is a manipulation of other's time". Khosravi articulates this notion with Victor Turner's concept of liminality (1969), "the transitory stage between two social positions, between two stages of life". As Jacobsen and Karlsen note, liminality or limbo refers to a "sense of temporal disjuncture, suspension and stagnation". To the authors, waiting is thus "an analytical lens (that) offers new insights into the complex and shifting nature of processes of bordering, belonging, state power, exclusion and inclusion" (2014:2). We can therefore assume that waiting is a state-generated border; it is yet one of the many borders that forced migrants have to cross.

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[1] We adopt the broader terms "forced migration" and "forced migrants" to refer to asylum seekers, refugees and other displaced people as a result of conflicts, natural or environmental disasters, or other human rights violations (DeWind, 2007).

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The research project and methodology

The present chapter's empirical dataset is drawn from a social survey designed for the PandPAS project, which aimed at highlighting asylum seekers and refugees (AS&R) experiences, concerns, needs and expectations in terms of integration (Mateus et al., 2019).[2] Besides refugees, and in order to have well consolidated accounts of the subjective representations of each actor at play, two more categories were part of the survey: stakeholders and local citizens. For that purpose, qualitative tools were used for data collection within all three major target groups. The study was multi-sited and comprised six European cities: Padova and Venice (Italy), Maribor (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia), Nicosia (Cyprus) and Lisbon (Portugal). In this text we will focus mainly on AS&R and stakeholders within the Portuguese context.[3]

The Portuguese AS&R group included fourteen interviewees including nine subjects under subsidiary protection, two subjects with refugee status and three in other situations.[4] Out of those fourteen subjects, ten were male and four were female. Concerning the country of birth, there were 10 Syrians, 1 Iraqi, 1 Eritrean, 1 Palestinian and 1 Cuban.[5]

Portugal has historically received few refugees and for this reason is a unique case study in the context of southern Europe. Due to its peripheral position on migration routes, it was the EU country with the lowest number of asylum applications before 2015. In 2016, Portugal

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[2] The project PandPAS focused on research, implement and disseminate sustainable models for the reception and integration of migrants, and to contribute to further improving migration policies and practices in Europe. Carried out over a two-year period (October 2017-September 2019), the project was promoted by a partnership of six organisations in five countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Slovenia, Italy and Portugal), which included municipalities, universities and non-governmental organisations. In addition to the research that informs this text, the project also developed a video documentary based on the experiences of refugees resettled in project partners' cities, available at https://youtube/GxVhL00HNpo.

[3] Data collection took place over an 8-month period between September 2018 and April 2019.

[4] While two had a temporary residence permit, which had to be renewed every 6 months, and were still waiting for the subsidiary protection official document to be issued, the third one, who had recently been deported from Germany back to Portugal, didn't have any official documents and was waiting for his case to be analysed.

[5] Some of the interviews were mediated by a suitable interpreter, selected according to each interviewee's own language and taking into consideration potential group affiliations that could symbolise oppression.

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received 1,397 applications for asylum and 1,750 in 2017 (SEF, 2018). Eritreans, Syrians, Ukrainians and Iraqis constitute a significant part of this population. They have been hosted in facilities provided by municipalities, NGOs and other local organisations, with a very diverse set of outcomes. Despite this increase, the number of asylum requests per capita remains modest when compared internationally.

Borders of language

Forced migrants’ integration is severely limited by linguistic boundaries, and by legal, administrative, and bureaucratic cultures of exclusion. Such obstacles constitute “borders of language” and “borders of bureaucracy”, external barriers that are experienced and internalised by forced migrants in their everyday lives which limit chances of integration into the wider society through linguistic and status exclusion.

As language capital becomes increasingly acknowledged for its role in mediating migration pathways, so does national language proficiency in stimulating social cohesion, even in multilingual cities and contexts. According to Baba and Dahl-Jørgensen (2013: 61), language is a “boundary phenomenon that is used by institutional actors (e.g. employers, the State) to discriminate among migrants”.

For forced migrants in Lisbon, learning Portuguese can be particularly challenging and difficult, despite the fact that language learning programmes have been organised. In fact, there must be a minimum number of participants for the course to start, but since asylum seekers and refugees are dispersed throughout the country, it is often the case that such requirement isn’t fulfilled.

> *Portugal brought refugees in here, didn't teach them any language courses, and expected them to integrate and find jobs.* [Interview no. 9, Syria]

Language difficulties emerged as one of the chief obstacles faced by forced migrants, as it restricts access to employment and hinders other daily life tasks. While interviewees recognised the importance of acquiring Portuguese language skills, they also pointed to the fact that it was a particularly difficult process for adult learners due to of lack of training offers, and professional and domestic responsibilities, which impose time constraints.

> *[The problem is] the organisations working with refugees, the institutions that are handling refugees. Because to them, refugees are only a business*

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> *and a commodity. This is how they are treating them. For example, they are saying that they don't provide adequate language courses.*[6] [Interview no. 6, Syria]

> *It's not enough for refugees to be prepared for the job market and life in general. Specially because they don't teach you Portuguese right from the beginning. It's only at the very end – in the last 3 months – that they teach you and it's only for 3 months.* [Interview no. 9, Syria]

As stated by Kalocsányiová (2020: 1905), "when a speaker moves from a known to an unknown place, which is particularly likely in cases of forced displacement, s/he is made (painfully) aware of the resources s/he does not have." Forced migrants claimed that not knowing, or not learning, the local language can equally compromise the access to basic rights.

> *If he goes there, they would dismiss him and say "OK, you should make an appointment first", but he can't because he can't speak the language and in that sense he feels that he doesn't have the same rights as people who speak the language.* [Interview no. 4, Iraq]

Interviewees also report that language training programmes don't meet specific needs of adult forced migrants, and lack adequate teaching tools and learning contents. The available courses are either too basic or too advanced. Due to a high heterogeneity of the class (different nationalities, different literacy levels, different language levels, etc.), the courses' structure doesn't promote an engagement from the behalf of students, leading to a loss of interest or a growing sense of frustration.

> *There are some things that politicians need to improve. For example, learning the Portuguese language. And it can't be just 150 hours and say "That's enough" or wait until they find a teacher ... 4 months, 6 months, 1 year without having language courses. I think that's wrong. Integration starts with learning Portuguese language. A person that doesn't speak Portuguese is never going to be integrated in local society.* [Interview no. 10, Eritrea]

> *The organisation said: "the program finished". (...) imagine, someone in one organisation he saw me since one year ago and he asked me "do you speak Portuguese now?" and I told him "no (...) what you do for me to speak Portuguese?" he told me "I send you 5 weeks or 45 days" (...) but 5 weeks or 45 days is nothing...* [Interview no. 6, Syria]

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[6] Third person quotes stand for the interpreter's oral account of the interviewee's answer.

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Although language training is usually part of the hosting organisation’s programme, there were three cases in which interviewees had to seek for lessons themselves. The same happens when subjects finish the first course and want to continue learning Portuguese.

> *When he came here he was received by the Câmara Municipal [City Council] de L. and he was put in S. J. M. [another city], in a house with other people. He said that the situation wasn't all too bad at the time, however they stayed there for over 8/9 months and he said that the formal procedures were going very badly, too slow. They didn't receive residence cards, they didn't start language courses, they were just sleeping, eating, drinking, without doing anything. He went to the organisation, asked for Portuguese courses and they told him to go to the streets and learn Portuguese. He didn't do anything, that lasted for 8 to 9 months.* [Interview no. 9, Syria]

Speaking the local language is a strong predictor of a successful integration (Chiswick and Miller, 2015). Language is, therefore, an instrument in immigration policy-making, which reveals (or not) governmental strategic thinking. The absence of broad and effective language learning programmes together with obstacles to its implementation and lack of investment, produce borders of exclusion that forced migrants cannot cross or overcome alone.

> *As a foreigner, when I went to the immigration services, I had to bear with everything. “You don’t know how to read?”, a clerk has the courage to tell someone “You don’t know how to read? Are you dumb? Are you illiterate?”. When that position exists it’s because there’s an institutional arrogance that allows the clerk to treat the foreigner in a pejorative way, because the government covers for the clerk.* [Interview no. 5, Cuba]

Language proficiency is a critical factor affecting integration. The barriers for language learning are exclusionary tactics that stall the integration process of forced migrants. They also fuel negative perceptions and attitudes within the host society, and open space for segregation and discrimination in daily life. As noted by Peirce (1995: 13), “it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time”.

Borders of bureaucracy

The “borders of bureaucracy” delay and restrain integration through status exclusion. The waiting period or “suspended time” is widely reported in

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forced migration studies, and has been analysed as an intentional dismissive policy (Kobelinsky, 2014).

Generally, bureaucracy is the reason why the asylum request procedure and integration plan is slower and longer. Forced migrants have to wait many months, sometimes even years, before receiving a final decision regarding their requests. In the meantime, their lives and possibilities to plan for the future are "suspended" until further notice. The decision on their asylum claim is unknown and, therefore, uncertainty about the possibility of staying in the country often results in situations of frustration, anxiety, idleness and lack of motivation. In some cases, the discourse on uncertainty is replaced by a form of "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011).[7]

> *Where will you be after one year and a half as a refugee? You will speak a little bit of Portuguese, you're going to find, in my opinion, a normal work with a salary of five hundred or six hundred euro in some supermarket or restaurant. But that is not what people left their country for.* [Interview no. 2, Syria]

After being admitted to the host country, forced migrants find themselves again and again in liminal areas. To cross these borders, they are dependent on third parties, entities, technicians, officials. Forced migrants end up putting pressure on institutions to accelerate the dynamics of institutional and social transformation. Yet, institutions aren't responsive. Their inaction pushes back and establishes new borders that perpetuate exclusion.

> *The organisation (...) received us and put us in a hotel in Praça de Espanha. The hotel is very bad. But the problem is that they told us: "OK, have yourselves a good rest, that we will come back tomorrow" (...). The day before no one came, two or three days after, no one came. After 15 days, no one came. I was here for the first time, knew nothing about it.* [Interview no. 1, Syria]

In Portugal, the access to public services and the labour market depends on having a valid temporary residence permit (ARP), which must be renewed several times until there is a final decision on the asylum claim. Despite the processing time being heterogeneous across regional offices, it has been regarded by all forced migrants as a hard challenge. The fact that

[7] Berlant (2011) refers to a sort of patience that enables one to suspend questions about the severity of the present time.

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"some people have been waiting for one year, some for two years" for an official decision either "about the social security number (or) about granting the refugee status" (Interview no. 10, Eritrea) is an indicator of the delays experienced by forced migrants, caused by an institutional slowdown.

> *So what he was waiting for was this plastic official (residence) card which would entitle him for all of these things. And he's saying that in Greece they were promised to be handed this (residence) card immediately after they arrived here, but it took him 2 years so he feels like he was treated as if he entered the country illegally.* [Interview no. 4, Iraq]

When prompted about the negative aspects about Portugal as a hosting country, many of the interviewed stated that "there's a lot of bureaucracy and that documents are always delayed" (Interview no. 4, Iraq). These frequent delays in terms of institutional responsiveness towards an increased number of individual requests undermines the access to important realms of integration, such as the labour market. Additionally, a lack of institutional preparation is stressed. In fact, as one of interviewees claimed,

> *Public servants don't have that much experience with refugees. They are experienced in working with foreigners but not with refugees.* [Interview no. 4, Iraq]

In other instances, it was possible to observe the dissonance that the specificity of these cases, together with the incapacity of institutions to adapt to the high speeds of change, produce on an institutional level. As illustrated in the following example, though theoretically speaking it should be possible to work with a temporary residence permit, technically the holders of this document are excluded from that possibility:

> *Before he had this residence card, he had a temporary residence permit for 6 months that didn't entitle him to many things. Although he was allowed to work, he couldn't get a social security number, he couldn't open a bank account. Many institutions didn't even recognise the document.* [Interview no. 4, Iraq]

Examination of the process for acquiring refugee status takes between six and eight months, but can last for more than a year, during which time the refugee's life is put on hold. It is not uncommon for the temporary residence permit to expire several times and social support to cease. These situations, which ultimately translate into limitations in terms of individual

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self-determination, are further highlighted by the institutional delays experienced by subjects regarding the examination and drafting of legal documents:

> *They said "We have accepted the asylum, now you just need the card. Wait one or two months and you'll have it". It's been one year now. They have no system; you know?* [Interview no. 7, Syria]

To "have no system" is how interviewees assess the quality of institutional capacity to enact congruent policies and bureaucratic procedures. As stressed by Hoag (2011: 82) "bureaucracies are always at some level opaque, inscrutable, and illogical to both 'insider' and 'outsider' alike. This opacity empowers bureaucracies and bureaucrats — they become gatekeepers, with control over the flow of information and resources". Instead of enabling access to important domains of social inclusion, such as work, it produces new borders and odd constraints. They prevent an individual and structural relief from situations of dependency. Governments are inefficient to readapt the bureaucratic system to a society that is increasingly complexified and contingent due to its accelerated nature.

> *Me and refugees don't need help. Refugees need opportunity. And it's really a big difference between them. I don't want to, like, touch on my shoulder and say "sorry, what do you need?". I don't want that. I need opportunity (...) the basics to start your future. When I say future, it means work or education. Those two things give you means for you to have a good life.* [Interview no. 2, Syria]

Conclusion

It has been our effort to demonstrate in this paper our initial proposition: that highly bureaucratised systems act as a further border that forced migrants must somehow cross. As we've seen through the experiences of forced migrants in Lisbon, what happens on an institutional level is an inability to provide a timely response to the emergence of new social problems. Language and bureaucracy were used as dimensions through which to explore "borders" within the host countries, in order to better understand how such dimensions illustrate immobility regimes, and control exercises over forced migrants. It was shown that the inexistence of a stable and effective learning programme for the Portuguese language and the long length and instability of the regularisation processes function as external internalised borders hindering integration and decreasing connections with the wider host community.

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The systemic inefficiency of institutions to translate refugee-hosting policies and integration programmes into practice, or the legalistic approach to welcome, are just a few of many other obstacles that lead to situations of limited autonomy and potential alienation (Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019). Bureaucracy continues to restrict the movement, the aspirations and the integration of people even after arrival to the hosting country. As noted by Povinelli (2011: 190), the "incitement to wait, to be patient, to bracket harm until the impasse has been resolved" is a power exercise.

The inefficiency of organisations in providing support and developing more suitable welcoming practices has shown the limitations of highly bureaucratised systems in responding to the demands of increasingly complex and pluralistic societies. On the individual level, forced migrants are required to wait, continuously engage with the system and to manage precarious lives. Nevertheless, the temporalities of waiting must also be perceived as manifold. Waiting can be actively experienced. Povinelli (2011) reminds us that the necessary endurance to achieve integration and autonomy also allows migrants to be something else than simply defeated by the circumstances in their condition of entrapment and existential immobility: the waiting also holds hope. And hope can constitute a form of engagement with the future in contexts characterised by crisis, conflict, uncertainty and immobility (Kleist & Jansen, 2016).

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Part Seven:

Identity and the Mind

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Borders of Identity: Abjection, Foreignness and Fascism

Katherine Cooklin

Julia Kristeva links subjectivity and identity to the maternal relationship and its necessary abjection. The child's original relationship to the mother (whether by original we mean *in utero* or after birth) is characterised by undifferentiation both of self and of drives, internal perceptions and emotions. There are no clear and distinct borders perceptually or psychically between the child and its mother. In order to separate from the maternal relationship in which there is no subject/object distinction, the child must attempt to abject or expel the mother. The undifferentiated fluid ground from which the "I" is engendered, and from which the "I" must try to individuate, however, is never fully expelled or repressed. The child's relationship to the maternal is transformed through this process of abjection, whereby the mother, although still compelling, is made repulsive. The child makes the mother abject in order to facilitate its individuation, but at this point the ego of the child is not yet a subject and the mother is not yet an object. The mother is the non objectal Other, and the abject is thus the space between what will become the Other as object and the subject. Abjection, Kristeva claims, is a narcissistic crisis. The identification that occurs is only a seeming. The child is not joined to part of the mother, but it is not distinct from the mother. The abject, then, is the Other that both engenders identity, and challenges the integrity of identity by confronting it with its own unstable borders.

Julia Kristeva's work on the abjection of the feminine is well known. Kristeva is quick to admit that actual women are not the only objects of abjection. However, given the cultural association of the maternal with the feminine, we might expect that those made abject are in some sense feminised. This does become evident in Kristeva's analysis of the Jew, another figure that has historically occupied the position of the abject. In her analysis of the misogynistic and anti-Semitic writings of

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Louis-Ferdinand Céline,[1] Kristeva extends her theory of abjection to fascism. The mechanism of abjection as protection from the undifferentiated maternal ground of identity is operative, but so too is a "rage against" the symbolic. Thus fascism is both an attempt to exceed the symbolic and a repressive defilement.

In what follows, I will show that Kristeva's analysis of Céline's Nazi literature and fascism points to a crisis of the borders of identity, wherein subjects are not able to recognise the difference within, and to live as subjects in-process. In the mechanisms of fascism, the rage against the symbolic and the ambivalent relation to abjection, there is a failure of productive negativity within the subject. This failure of productive negativity within the subject is also manifest in the body politic, and maintains within it the foreigner as a figure of both fascination and fear.

Linking fascism with the psyches of the individuals who constitute the body politic, Kristeva claims that with Céline, we are "given the most daring X-ray of the 'drive foundations' of fascism."[2] The psychic foundations of fascism begin with what Kristeva identifies as a "rage against the Symbolic" which is a response to a rigid or hypersymbolic social order that is found to be emasculating.[3] Kristeva links the rage against the Symbolic as stemming from an overly repressed semiotic element. Kristeva argues that the unleashed semiotic borders both on psychosis, (as in the subject's return to the state of nonmeaning) and totalitarianism or fascism.[4] The link between the semiotic and psychosis is clear. The link between the semiotic and fascism requires elaboration.

Piecing together Kristeva's remarks, a trajectory emerges whereby the overly repressed semiotic is unleashed to burst the frustrating symbolic choke hold. Kristeva reads in Céline's anti-Semitic literature a drama of struggle "against a desired and frustrating, castrating, and sodomizing father"[5] that is represented in authoritative social and political structures. Kristeva sees Céline as identifying this authority with the social and moral establishments based in Jewish monotheism, and the Jew becomes the target of "all hatred, of all desire, of all fear of the Symbolic."[6] In the anti-Semitic fantasy, the Jew is first viewed as all powerful. Kristeva notes that Céline describes the Jew as a man more so than any other, as fearless,

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[1] The pen-name of Louis-Ferdinand Destouches (1894-1961).
[2] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p. 155.
[3] Ibid p. 178.
[4] Kristeva, "From one identity to another" in Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva*, p. 94.
[5] Ibid., p. 112.
[6] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p. 180.

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ambitious, and having almost magical powers. Céline's vision of the Jew is of one morphing into whatever the environment requires. According to Céline, the Jews' success is due to their great power of assimilation, to blend into their environment, to be everywhere. According to Céline's view, the Jew becomes a tyrannical despot, both envied and feared. The anti-Semite Céline, lacking any power in the face of the Jew, is feminised by him. Céline repeatedly refers to the Jew as "corn-holing" Aryans. Céline writes that the "kikes stick it up your ass and if you want to be corn-holed just let us know."[7]

In this narrative, the Jew gains power first by the mastery of pure reason, and a hyperintellectualism. In tracing the anti-Semitic fantasy, Kristeva argues that the Jew is seen as finally gaining power through total submission to the religion, which represents the law of the father. At this point Kristeva asks "if he submits to the Other and draws out of it his mastery as well as his jouissance, is not the dreaded Jew an object of the Father, a piece of waste, his wife as it were, an abjection?"[8] At this point we see in Kristeva's account of the anti-Semitic trajectory that the Jew becomes feminised, becomes the Father's wife.

Let us not forget that this story is the story of the anti-Semite rather than the story of the Jew. According to Kristeva's account of abjection, the move from Father to wife seems to be a result of the anti-Semitic Céline projecting his own repressed abjection onto the Jew, making him the target of such fascination and hatred,m turning him into a conjunction of waste object and desire.

> The Jew becomes the feminine exalted to the point of mastery, the impaired master, the ambivalent the border where exact limits between same and other, subject and object, and even beyond these, between inside and outside, and disappearing – hence an Object of fear and fascination. Abjection itself, he is abject: dirty rotten. And I who identify with him, who desire to share with him a brotherly, mortal embrace in which I lose my own limits, I find myself reduced to the same abjection, a fecalized, feminized, passivated rot: "the repulsive Céline."[9]

Céline's anti-Semitism and fascist tendencies began with a failure to acknowledge and symbolise the difference and the abject within his own identity. Still unable to acknowledge his own identity crisis, Céline accounted for his fascist literature by stating that he had mistaken himself

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[7] Ibid., p. 183.
[8] Ibid., p. 185.
[9] Ibid.

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for Louis XV when he purged France of the Jesuits. According to Kristeva, the mask of Majesty was taken up by Céline to "conceal the empty, dilapidated castle of a foul, putrid, crisis-ridden identity."[10] In other words, the mask of majesty concealed the abject ground of Céline's own identity.

Kristeva's diagnosis of Céline, and of fascism thus far, indicates a crisis of the borders of identity. First there is a rage against a hypersymbolic order that coincides with a lack of symbolic power in the individual. Kristeva suggests that the individual is unable to deal with his own fragile ego boundaries, and as a reaction moves between rigid symbolic boundaries and semiotic excess, rather than enacting a fluid and productive dialectic of the two. The individual lacks the power to effectively discharge the semiotic in new symbolic constructions. Kristeva refers to the semiotic as a movement of negativity, as both disruptive and productive, animating the symbolic and also transgressing its boundaries. In the case of one who has come to terms with one's internal foreignness and instability, subjectivity is a process of renewal in relation to others. In the movement of productive negativity, the semiotic may exceed symbolic identity patterns and allow new ones to form. In the case of fascism, there is a stifling of productive negativity. Not having come to terms with one's own internal difference, foreignness, and abject, the individual must displace his own abjection onto another figure. This displacement can be viewed as the inability to live as a subject in process. The displacement of abjection onto another figure can be seen as the attempt to secure identity against the internal threat to identity. The Jew becomes the scapegoat for one who is unable to live as a fluid identity, open to the other within and the other without.

Kristeva argues that there is a tendency to substitute a second law for the frustrating hypersymbolic one. This response leads to fascism. Here we can clearly see the link between Kristeva's analysis of the individual and the political. On an individual level, Céline's writing indicates an identity in crisis, and the inability to live as a subject in process, to accept and negotiate the heterogeneity within subjectivity. On a political level, the same identity crisis appears, and is symptomatic of the individuals who make up the body politic. Fascism is a result of a new law substituting for the overly repressive one linked to the symbolic. Paradoxically, Kristeva describes this new law as an over reaction of and for the undifferentiated ground of primary narcissism. It is fuelled by a desire to return to a state of undifferentiation, of pure identity as sameness, purged of all differences.

The law of fascism is a law seen as "mystic positivity", a law that will purge the body politic of all differentiation and take us "beyond

[10] Ibid., p. 186.

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politics" to fulfill a promise of complete unity.

> Beyond politics, and yet taking into account, material positivity, a full, tangible, reassuring, and happy substance, will be embodied in the Family, the Nation, the Race, and the Body…[the fascist] wants [these entities], he fantasies them as capable of being full, without other, without threat, without heterogeneity; he wants them harmoniously to absorb their differences into a kind of sameness that would be obtained by means of a subtle drifting, a scansion, a punctuation that would relay but without interruption — a replica of primary narcissism.[11]

On a social level, fascism indicates a crisis of identity, and functions to provide identity boundaries. Kristeva suggests that it is due to an inability of subjects to 1) accept their own abject grounds of identity, which in turn leads to 2) an inability to live as a subject in-process/on trial. Suffering with this sort of identity crisis, individuals within the body politic are eager for a scapegoat that will maintain an illusion of identity. Fascism does this while also paradoxically upholding the narcissistic fantasy of "mystic positivity" which renders all difference external to the group identity. Fascism is an attempt to avoid the trap of an impossible identity. But, avoidance of this impossible identity based on a dialectic of the semiotic and symbolic, based on heterogeneity, requires a return to a state of nondifference, which becomes a rigid identity upheld by the projection of difference onto an external figure which is kept at bay through defilement.

Kristeva sees this dynamic operating not only in overtly fascist regimes, but also in the rise of nationalistic movements in general. These are motivated by a desire to move to an "archaic, primitive 'common denominator'," and the rejection of all foreignness. A defensive hatred of otherness leads one to "withdraw into a sullen, warm, private world, unnamable and biological, the impregnable 'aloofness' of a weird primal paradise — family, ethnicity, nation, race."[12] The image of the foreigner is used by Kristeva to investigate the reactions it invokes in us, and the strangeness it embodies. Kristeva argues that the foreigner is a general object of both fascination and loathing. To explain this, Kristeva theorises that the wellspring of foreignness comes not from without, but from within. "Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the place that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder […] The foreigner comes in when the consciousness

[11] Ibid., p. 178-9.
[12] Kristeva, *Nations Without Nationalism*, p. 3.

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of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigner."[13]

The foreigner is a figure of fascination and fear, one that is a constant player in our political lives. Kristeva argues that the foreigner occupies such a central place because the foreigner is within us. Unless we can come to terms with the foreigner, the strangeness within ourselves, we will continue to posit another, a foreigner, as a threatening figure and the object of fear and hate. Kristeva implies that we can incorporate or somehow identify with our own internal other, and in so doing, be more welcoming of external otherness.

> With the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings and otherness that is both biological and symbolic and becomes an integral part of the same. Henceforth the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation. The foreigner is neither glorified as a secret *Volksgeist* nor banished as a disruptive of rationalist urbanity. Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided.[14]

Kristeva argues that the foreigner is really within us, it is our own unconscious elements that threaten our identity, and on a collective level this plays out as xenophobia, racism, etcetera. The dream of an identity without difference is also expressed by nationalist movements based on the concept of *Volksgeist*, a homogonous entity rooted in an origin of sameness that erases differences within the group by exclusion. The sameness of the *Volksgeist* "changes — only too rapidly […] into a repressive force aimed at *other* peoples and extolling *one's own."*[15] Instead of the *Volksgeist*, Kristeva finds promise in Montiesquieu's notion of the *esprit général.*

The *esprit général* is a nation made up of a series of differences, it is dynamic and always open to change. Kristeva identifies the nation as *esprit général* as a historical identity (not rooted in a mythic sameness), contingent, dynamic, and constantly evolving through diversity. It is a nation with different levels of social reality that are integrated but not absorbed into a sameness. It operates via a "logical multiplicity whose diversity is to be maintained without the possibility of having one social (logical) stratum dominate the others […] integration without a leveling process."[16]

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[13] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 1.
[14] Ibid., p. 183.
[15] Kristeva, *Nations without Nationalism*, p. 54.
[16] Ibid., p. 56.

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If we take seriously the link between individual subjectivity and identity, and collective identity, then it makes sense that Kristeva would view her psychoanalysis of the individual as a political intervention. Social/political identities are reflective of a personal psychodynamic. At this point we may question how effective this intervention could be. Clearly, Kristeva does not adequately focus on the social and structural aspects that lead to oppressive and fascist social arrangements. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to believe that social phenomena are symptomatic of the individuals that make up the social body. Hence, while Kristeva's analysis of social oppression is not sufficient to account for all social oppression, it does offer fruitful insights into the individual mechanisms operative in social oppression.

Coming to terms with our own internal heterogeneity is one step in overcoming the crises of identity that lead to oppressive social arrangements. Not doing so results in what we might call a stifling of productive negativity. Rather than tending fluid identities, open to change and difference, subjects seek rigid boundaries to maintain identity. Without the productive dialectic of the semiotic and symbolic, subjects repeat the expulsion of difference that is manifest in social oppression. In order to be subjects in-process/on trial we must, in addition to acknowledging our own heterogeneity, have the psychic space to negotiate fluid boundaries. We must be able to reconstruct ourselves and give meaning to our unconscious elements. This requires, according to Kristeva, the imaginary and the psychic space to work through unconscious elements and traumas and give them meaning and representation. For Kristeva, because otherness is inscribed in identity it is important to keep our relations with others fluid and varied.

> The wellbeing of the subject […] results from his capacity to establish as many optimal connections with others as possible. This isn't out of a concern to make him useful to a community whose criteria we might have established (which is what ideologies and religions do) but in order to allow him a plurality of connections in communities that can change and be questioned.[17]

Here we see the connection between the individual and others, and the political implications of Kristeva's psychoanalytic model. Open fluid connections with others are necessary for both the optimal functioning of ourselves and of others, and for healthy communities that may come to terms with foreignness. Like individuals, communities must also be in-

[17] Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt*, pp. 233-234.

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process, open to change and questioning. On an individual level, the imaginary allows us to undo "false selves constructed as defenses against external invasion."[18]

The false selves that Kristeva refers to are the rigid identity boundaries erected to keep the abject from threatening complete dissolution. These rigid boundaries are evinced on a cultural level in the form of fascism and oppression. The relationship between the imaginary and interpretation on the one hand, and abjection on the other, is political. Kristeva argues that in order to cease making others the objects of abjection, we must interpret and give meaning to the internal abjection that underlies our own subjectivity.

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[18] Ibid, p. 233.

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CROSSING THE BORDERS OF LANGUAGE: STORYTELLING STRATEGIES IN MADNESS NARRATIVES

KATARZYNA SZMIGIERO

Introduction: narrative versus experience

E. M. Forster aptly illustrated the difference between story and plot: "'The king died and then the queen died' is a story. 'The king died and then the queen died of grief' is a plot."[1] It seems natural for any narrative to have a cause and effect relationship between temporal events. As readers, we expect to find some coherence and meaning in the narrative we read – just as we expect our lives to have some kind of a shape, inner logic or aim. Haphazard events, unpredictable reactions, complete randomness lead to confusion. Being completely out of control of one's life would make existence impossible to cope with. Many scholars have observed a degree of similarity between lives and stories:

> The idea that life itself has narrative shape (in the form of personal life stories and collective histories) or that humans naturally think in narrative terms has been argued persuasively by a number of formidable theorists.[2]

Yet, a similar number of thinkers have equally vehemently denied this analogy. The fact that people want their lives to have a meaning (and, for instance, hold religious ideas that explain all life events and impose strict codes of behaviours) is no proof that life indeed has a meaning but rather suggests the desperate need to impose some order on what otherwise appears to be chaos. As Cheryl Mattingly reminds her readers, lives have no plot and no narrators and lack a "unifying structure".[3]

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[1] E M Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 61.
[2] Cheryl Mattingly, "Emergent Narratives", p. 182.
[3] Ibid.

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Illness, especially of a chronic or disabling kind, shatters the way most people envisage the development of their lives. Retrospectively, however, individuals who are forced to live with an illness or have managed to survive a potentially life-threatening condition impose on their experience a metaphorical perspective. They may compare illness to a journey or a spiritual quest, which enriched them, taught them new skills or made them revalue their priorities. Others see illness as a battlefield, in which an alien power wants to take over control of their lives. Nevertheless, there are some who are not able to impose any order or sense on what happened to them and attempt to render this experience. Such stories are sometimes labelled "chaos narratives".[4] Pathographies dealing with the theme of madness often contain elements of chaos narratives since insanity questions the predictable, expected and assumed, more than any other medical condition.

Chaos narrative

Writing about the loss of reason addresses the inner chaos of the psyche.[5] Since "turn[ing] to words to say what cannot be said" is by definition an impossible task, these narratives attempt to render the randomness and havoc of a tormented mind through disorganised, unfinished sentences, blurring the border between reality and hallucinations, employing the so-called word salad.[6] The best example of such a narrative is Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, in which the real life of the protagonist is narrated in the same way as her hallucinatory conversations with imaginary guests, making it impossible for the reader to decipher what really happens. In fact, it is the only effective way to present hallucinations as threatening – when they indeed happen they seem real so they have to be indistinguishable from the rest of the narrative. This is how Elyn Saks tries to present the bewildering schizophrenic experience:

> [f]resh tasting lemon juice naturally. There's a natural volcano. They put it in my head. It's erupting. I've killed lots of people. I've killed children. There's a flower on the bookshelf. I can see it blooming. […] My teacher is God. I used to be God but got demoted. Do you think it's a question of Kilimanjaro?[7]

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[4] Arthur W Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller*, pp. 97-114.
[5] Ibid.
[6] W S Merwin, quoted in Anne Henriette Klauser, *With Pen in Hand*, p. x.
[7] E Saks, *The Center Cannot Hold*, p. 141.

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She employs schizophasia, "a deviant linguistic behavior which can be […] observed in certain schizophrenics" to emphasise that her racing thoughts could not be conveyed in a conventional manner comprehensible to others.[8] Her speech contains "glossomania, rhyming, alliterating, intrusion of extraneous matters, and syntactic errors."[9] There is an inner logic to what she says but the words are chosen due not to their meaning but according to their sound. Likewise, the surroundings constantly distract her from sticking to the topic so she keeps on digressing from her original thought. Saks's decision to resort to schizophasia to render the periods when she was severely frightened and deluded is an apt choice as she makes the reader realise that an incredible amount of genuine suffering is hidden beneath the layer of seemingly incoherent babbling.

Madness cannot be properly rendered into words because much of what goes on in the mind is pre-verbal. Moreover, writing it down introduces some order, for example spatial order, onto the experience. Some feeling is described first, another later, while in reality they might be happening simultaneously. For instance, Marya Hornbacher, describing the altering moods, devotes one paragraph to a negative interpretation of her surroundings, the following to a positive one. First her husband is seen as an insipid weakling, dependent on her for energy and ideas; then, he is viewed as stable, devoted and supportive, loyal to her despite her raging behaviour.[10] She describes her lover in an identical manner. In one paragraph he is "the most amazing man […], fascinating, beautiful, glamorous", in the neighbouring one the same person is described as "a run-of-the mill, insecure, pretty-boy asshole."[11] The reader is left with the second impression as the final, conclusive one, which may not entirely correspond to the author's state of mind. Likewise, the very temporal nature of a first-person narrative implies that the narrator must have survived the experience to tell the tale. The experience cannot be presented without the interpretative distance of time. It is a paradox of writing about madness and, accidentally, one of many paradoxes connected with understanding mental disorders, as Analu Verbin argued. Writing about insanity when it lasts is unintelligible; writing about it when it passes imposes upon it the rules of reason and health, "bringing lucidity to disturbance and fragmentation".[12]

[8] Günter Peuser, "Jargonaphasia and Schizophasia", p. 217.
[9] Chaika, quoted in Peuser, op. cit.
[10] M Hornbacher, *Madness: A Bipolar Life*, p. 58.
[11] Ibid., p. 101.
[12] Liam Clarke, *Fiction's Madness*, p. 162.

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Arthur W. Frank calls such incomprehensible stories chaos narratives as they lack "sequence or discernible causality".[13] Yet he realises they must be "reflected on retrospectively" by the act of writing.[14] Thus, a true chaos narrative cannot be written: what is presented as such is rather a re-constructed imitation, a simulation of the real thing which remains beyond comprehensible expression. A similar opinion is expressed by Patrick McGrath, whose *Spider* (1991) and *Asylum* (1997) are well-known depictions of insanity. The author grew up in the grounds of the high-security psychiatric hospital at Broadmoor, where his father was a Medical Superintendent, which has made his representation of madness medically accurate, though occasionally gruesome and sensational. McGrath "believes that psychosis and writing are mutually exclusive, the one characterised by disintegration, the other 'yielding to a clear design'."[15]

Figurative language

Since a true chaos narrative is an impossibility, resorting to figurative language is a commonly employed method of appropriating madness. Renana Elran looks at metaphors as tools useful not only in conveying but also exploring madness. The nature of a metaphor is to transfer meaning from one semantic field onto another. Thus, creating a new concept otherwise inexpressible, a metaphor was seen in ancient rhetoric as a trope, that is a figure of thought, not just a figure of speech. A similar role of creating new meanings is played by poetic imagery, similes and paradoxes, with which some madness narratives are filled. It is especially visible in the titles of many texts.

In many narratives, madness is compared to a journey in a subtitle (Saks's *My Journey through Madness*, Schiller's *A Journey Out of the Torment of Madness*, Mary Barnes's *Two Accounts of a Journey through Madness*) while others stress its de-stabilising nature (Saks's *The Center Cannot Hold.*). The latter title uses a famous quotation from W. B. Yeats's poem "The Second Coming", which was also cited by R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self*. Perceiving illness as a spiritual journey, or even a quest, has a long tradition in European literature, which Arthur W. Frank traces back to John Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*.[16] These texts not only accept suffering caused by illness, but try to make sense of it and to

[13] Frank, op. cit, p. 97.
[14] Ibid., p. 98.
[15] P McGrath, quoted in Clarke, *Fiction's Madness*, p. 22.
[16] Frank, op. cit., p. 116.

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use it in order to achieve personal growth. Surviving an illness is compared in them to gaining insight, transformation or even rebirth. Such an attitude is especially visible in Mary Barnes's narrative. She believes her illness started before she was even born as she absorbed the subconscious conflicts of her pregnant mother. Mary decides to "go down", to enter the abyss of madness without trying to oppose it in order to come back as a new self. Though both the theory and results of this approach are highly controversial in her case, many authors recognise the spiritual potential of being ill.

Titles of other madness narratives are equally meaningful. Choosing *Girl, Interrupted* for the title of her novel, Susanna Kaysen was not only paying a tribute to a famous painting by Johannes Vermeer but also referring to illness and hospitalisation as departing from the ordinary course of life. Her life as a teenager was, indeed, unexpectedly and irrevocably interrupted by her hospitalisation. Some titles are even more symbolic in character, such as *The Bell Jar* or *The Snake Pit*. The first one is an attempt to render the isolating quality of depression, the separation and inability to participate in the world outside one's psyche. Plath's title is borrowed from Antonia White's *The Sugar House*, in which the heroine, Clara Batchelor, is trapped in a passionless marriage to an irresponsible, childish (and apparently impotent) Archie. Her descent into depression is compared to an overwhelming sense "of being utterly cut off from life, grasping for air inside a bell jar".[17] The second title views madness as an ordeal – one either succumbs to it entirely and loses one's self or the shock of the illness restores value to one's life. Interestingly, Hornbacher's *Wasted* is subtitled *A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*, not a memoir of an anorectic and bulimic, to suggest the eating disorder was so encompassing that the girl's identity was completely eradicated by it.

Elaine Showalter observes the frequent use of the word "mirror" in madness narratives and their titles.[18] She mentions Mary Cecil's *Through the Looking Glass* and Antonia White's *Beyond the Glass*. The latter includes many references to mirrors and glasses, their reflecting, distorting and separating qualities. One could add the third part of Janet Frame's autobiography, *An Envoy from the Mirror City*, to that list. According to Showalter, mirrors provide an intertextual allusion to the famous journey of Lewis Carroll's Alice. Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted*, for instance, opens with a quotation from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.[19] Her descent into eating disorders is compared to stepping through the

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[17] A White, *The Sugar House*, p. 211.
[18] E Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 211.
[19] M Hornbacher, *Wasted*, p. 9.

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looking glass. Clara Batchelor in Antonia White's novel makes a similar analogy. Alice finds herself in an incomprehensible world, ruled by bizarre, unpredictable, and changeable rules and confusing logic. Indeed, it seems to be a perfect counterpart to the experience of madness. As Hornbacher says, it is easy to step into this baffling world – out of curiosity or carelessness – but comeback is painful and sometimes impossible.

Figurative language is profusely used within the texts as well. Some authors, especially Frame, excel at writing highly poetic prose. In *Owls Do Cry*, the relatively realistic account of a family history is intertwined with interior monologues of Daphne, a mentally ill woman hospitalised for many years. They are intensely lyrical pieces commenting on the fate of her siblings and the memories of an impoverished New Zealand childhood. Their language is mysterious, indirectly expressing fear, loneliness and sadness through bizarre images and associations. Such a technique resembles the concept of T. S. Eliot's "objective correlative", since, instead of directly addressing the inner mental states of the characters, Frame chooses external equivalents evoking them.[20] In a similar manner, the sections of the novel presenting Daphne's hospitalisation are filtered through the heroine's illness. Her madness is a result of having "been bathed in a trough and dipped under a waterfall and the pine-needles [have been] picked from [her] scars so that they bleed invisible blood."[21] The doctors who treat her are

> thieves who sneak through the night and day of their lives, exchanging their counterfeit whys and hows and wheres, like fake diamonds and gold, to zip them inside their leather human brain till the next raid and violence of exchanging, when they jingle their clay and glass baubles, untouched by sun.[22]

They carry in their pockets "the sprout[s] of a rubber tree to listen at the underground door of the heart and its beating of secret". The readers see the psychiatric ward through Daphne's eyes and view it as a hostile and incomprehensible environment. A similar technique is employed in *Faces in the Water*. Nearly all fiction by Frame rejects easy interpretation due to idiosyncratic and lyrical language and a lack of linear plot. Ironically, what made her an internationally acclaimed writer locked her inside a hospital, since in one of her letters to her sister she

[20] Chris Baldick, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p. 154.
[21] J Frame, *Owls Do Cry*, p. 130.
[22] Ibid., p. 134.

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> was quoting from Virginia Woolf, in describing the gorse as having a 'peanut-buttery smell'. The description was questioned by the doctor who read the letters [as all were censored], and judged to be an example of [her] 'schizophrenia.'[23]

Old psychiatric textbooks, as James Hillman writes, "referred to style for aid in diagnosis".[24] Flamboyant poetic devices suggest mental pathology. Frame's unique style would thus become her weapon, a tool of revenge. Also Hornbacher invents striking expressions to describe her mental state: recuperating after a severe manic episode she is "holding [her]self carefully, like an egg" while previously her "head was full of cotton".[25] Lauren Slater calls her obsessive-compulsive disorder, which makes her unable to concentrate, "a hiccup of the brain".[26] It is a constant interruption of ordinary daily activities, which, though not dangerous, is exhausting, irritating and, through its ceaselessness, eventually debilitating. Another writer, Elizabeth Wurtzel, refers to her depression as a black wave chasing her, wishing to drown her.[27] Also Kaysen compares the start of schizophrenia in her hospital roommate to a "tidal wave of blackness".[28] Comparing madness to darkness or blackness is a common strategy, probably rooted in the old humour theory, in which melancholia was a result of the black bile accumulated in the brain. The very word melancholy comes from the Greek, as *melaina chore* meant exactly black bile.[29] Apart from causing the morose character, it was also responsible for dark hair and swarthy complexion.[30] Blackness was thus associated with devilish darkness (those possessed by the devil were of melancholic temperament) but also despair and death.[31] Yet, as many depressed people state, it is not the pain of sadness but rather the complete flattening of emotions, the inability to feel anything at all, negative or positive, that is the true reason of their suffering. As Wurtzel puts it

> [i]n the course of life, there is sadness and pain and sorrow, all of which, in their right time and season, are normal – unpleasant, but normal. Depression is in an altogether different zone because it involves a

[23] J Frame, *Autobiography*, p. 213.
[24] J Hillman, *Healing Fiction*, p. 15.
[25] M Hornbacher, *Madness: A Bipolar Life*, pp. 152, 139.
[26] L Slater, "Black Swans", p. 141.
[27] E Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation*, pp. 107-8.
[28] S Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*, p. 5.
[29] Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: An Anatomy of Depression*, p. 286.
[30] Raymond Klibansky et al., *Saturn i Melancholia*, p. 76.
[31] Etienne Trillat, *Historia Histerii*, pp. 30-31.

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> complete absence: absence of affect, absence of feeling, absence of response, absence of interest. The pain you feel in the course of major clinical depression is an attempt on nature's part (nature, after all, abhors a vacuum) to fill up the empty space.[32]

That is why the title of Cait Irwin's memoir, *Monochrome Days: A Firsthand Account of one Teenager's Experience with Depression*, seems very appropriate to render the dullness of some forms of madness. Only by means of figurative language can the subjective experience of insanity be transferred into language and communicated to the readers.

Naming the illness

Many authors attempt to name, in a figurative manner, their illness.[33] Since they consider it an alien, malignant entity attacking their integrity from the outside, they often call it "a beast". Jane Hillyer's *Reluctantly Told* presents the narrator's descent into schizophrenia, which is perceived as an animal possessing her and eventually turning into her, as Elran observes.[34] Losing her rationality through madness makes her feel no longer human as, instead of thinking, she is led by her instincts. Likewise, Elizabeth Wurtzel compares her depression to a monster she has herself invented and yet her creation started overtaking her identity.[35] Such a view of madness not only borrows from the way of thinking about the insane popular during the Enlightenment, but also from the theories of supernatural possession. Agency and individuality are lost to the dominant Other, who takes total control over the behaviour of the possessed person. As Elran argues, comparing madness to a beast is also indebted to Freudian ideas, since mental illness releases the animalistic drives lurking in the unconsciousness. Thus, a beast has come to symbolise the loss of humanity, coherent identity and subjectivity.[36] Also J. Lisa Richesson perceives madness as a creature that "rises out of mists on the moor and

[32] Wurtzel, op. cit., p. 22.

[33] There exists a long tradition, dating back to Greek and Roman mythology, of calling depression "a black dog". The phrase, used by Samuel Johnson, was made famous by Winston Churchill. English folklore often referred to black dogs as harbingers of evil, for instance J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series borrows from this tradition using a gigantic black dog, called the Grim, as an omen of death. An Australian charity which aims to aid people with affective disorders called itself the Black Dog Institute.

[34] Renana Elran, "Metaphors of Madness in Narratives of Schizophrenia", p. 46.

[35] Wurtzel, op. cit., p. 46.

[36] Elran, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

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haunts [one's] soul" forcing one to self-harm, as beasts feed on blood.[37] Tracy Thompson, in a text appropriately entitled *The Beast* (1995), and Marya Hornbacher, in *Madness*, write about the dangers of living on the brink of sanity, as during each remission they are aware that the animal-madness has not died, but is hiding, waiting to attack. Independently of each other, they use nearly identical imagery to describe the threatening feeling of living on the edge of reason: "[t]he madness sleeps under the house, its scaly tail over its nose. I walk carefully in the house, placing my feet one in front of the other, making sure the floor doesn't creak."[38] For Cait Irwin, referring to her depression as "the beast that invaded [her] body"[39] helps her to distance her personality from her illness, and describe her experiences "without judgement or self-blame".[40] She, as a person, is not inherently damaged or flawed, she suffers from a chemical imbalance that blurs her true identity. Such a separation appears to be a necessity as it allows for the preservation of non-illness identity.

Even those writers who adopt a more matter-of-fact register, such as Barbara Gordon, attempt to convey the elusive and paradoxical nature of insanity. Writing about her psychotic break caused by Valium withdrawal, Gordon refers to that period as "fifty-seven days that I could scarcely remember. Fifty-seven days that I would never forget."[41] Though one may argue it is impossible never to forget what one hardly remembers, in the case of madness it is a very adequate and precise description. One may not have registered the behaviour or understood the motivation behind it, but undeniably one remembers the confusion and the terror of the experience. The apparent linguistic paradox reveals a psychological truth that cannot be explained otherwise.

Conclusions

Madness narratives try "to find a form that accommodates the mess", looking for the best literary equivalents for the experience of insanity.[42] Nevertheless, visual art might be a better medium than language and narratives to communicate insanity as the works of Sandra Uray-Kennett (music from another room) and Jennifer Kanary (Roomforthoughts), prove.

[37] L J Richesson, "The Scream", p. 75.
[38] M Hornbacher, *Madness: A Bipolar Life*, p. 152.
[39] C Irwin, *Monochrome Days*, p. 7.
[40] Ibid., p. 74.
[41] B Gordon, *I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can*, p. 108.
[42] T Diver, quoted in James Olney, *Memory and Narrative: the Weaving of Life-Writing*, p. 12.

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Through artistic installations and disquieting images the inner world of madness can be accessed by those who visit their exhibitions. It can help them understand what the mad experience daily, develop sympathy and reduce prejudice.[43]

Irrespective of the medium, appropriating the experience of madness in an art form is always an attempt to help others understand it. Karl Jaspers' distinction between explaining and understanding, expressed in *General Psychopathology* (1913), is crucial here. Explanation is an objective, scientific method in which facts and events are evaluated "from without" while understanding stands for knowing "the psychic events 'from within'".[44] In order to treat mental illness successfully, one needs not only to explain its symptoms and fill out a prescription but to be able to identify and sympathise with the patients.

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[43] Editors' note: see essays by Steve Blundell, Gavin Parkinson and Deanna Petherbridge in R Pine (ed.), *Creativity, Madness and Civilisation* (2007).

[44] K Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*, vol. 2, p. 28.

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Life in the Borderland of Exile: Lawrence Samuel Durrell and Lawrence George Durrell

Ian S. MacNiven

I should begin with a confession and a warning. These pages are about the experience of exile as it affected several members of the Durrell family, but my judgements are perforce coloured by my own birth and upbringing as a colonial child, sent to live among strangers in a land I did not recognise as my own. Much later I travelled to India to see at first hand what the Durrells had experienced.

The Punjab, that area of northern India in which the Durrell family lived, fought, worked, and raised children, and where Lawrence Samuel Durrell, father of Lawrence George Durrell, was born, spent most of his working life, and was buried, was a frontier of Empire, the *British* Empire, to be sure. By convention on world maps the British Empire was often shown in red, and as Joseph Conrad's narrator Marlow was to remark in *Heart of Darkness*, "There was a vast amount of red – good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there."[1] There was an element of irony in Conrad's statement, as there would be in the writer Larry Durrell's view of that Empire, even as he served it in various diplomatic capacities.

For many, empire meant exile, as the European empire-builders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to establish and enforce the boundaries of empires for their "home" countries. Sometimes the exile took root successfully – so indelibly "English" did Conrad become that one has to remind oneself that his native tongue was Polish and early on his culture was largely French. His command of English became so perfect that only an occasional Slavic construction betrays his linguistic heritage. He did not, unlike Vladimir Nabokov, an author whose exile was forced upon him by the political upheavals of the twentieth century, write comfortably in three languages. With the Durrells it was otherwise: their

[1] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 10.

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mother tongue was always English, despite Larry Durrell's boast that "we spoke the languages" of India. (With the several Durrells in this story, I mean no disrespect when I call Lawrence Durrell *Larry*, Gerald Malcolm Durrell *Gerry*, and their father Lawrence Samuel.)

There is a double irony here, for among Marlow's select audience of four aboard the yawl *Nellie*, is a "Director of Companies", whose view of European "progress" cannot be assumed to have been the same as Marlow's, although they are old friends. Indeed, I have always been acutely conscious of Conrad's irony, and have viewed Marlow as a narrator of dubious reliability – at least, insofar as many have come to see him as a faithful spokesperson of Conrad's views. Conrad surely *did* want him to be seen as vastly preferable to the "pilgrims" sent out from Europe as operatives serving what would come to be called *La Compagnie du Congo belge*, yet he also wanted him to be recognised as a critic of Leopold's *Belgian* Congo – the rape of an immense colony for the financial benefit of the King through the exploitation of the rubber indigenous to the country. (Natives who refused to collect rubber for the Company were often killed or had their hands cut off.)

Those who eventually complained that Conrad showed disrespect for the Africans in the story, beginning with Chinua Achebe in 1975 branding him as "a bloody racist" (he later revised this dictum to "a thorough-going..."), surely miss the point. For instance, the woodcutters employed to feed the furnace of Marlow's river steamer are portrayed as men of honour and restraint, in stark contrast to nearly every white person who figures in the story. The woodcutters are virtually starving, yet they refrain from over-powering and perhaps eating the whites on board, simply because they had made a contract to perform a certain task in return for a few lengths of brass wire per week. They keep their part of the bargain. The only whites who are true to their duties, apart from Marlow himself, are the steamboat mechanic and the bookkeeper of the Central Station – and the last-named is utterly lacking in human empathy. Marlow, in a clear indication of where his feelings lie, imagined himself joining the dancing natives on the river bank for "a jump and a howl", but refrained, he tells us, because he had a ship to run – a sacred obligation for a licensed mariner. An important point is that *Heart of Darkness* is about colonialism, a moral disease, a blight on European society.

You could criticise Conrad for failing to give a full and just portrayal of the native Congolese – but that would require a book with an entirely different aim and focus. His purpose here was to reveal the *darkness* at the core of European pretentions of rectitude in their running of their colonial empires. Similarly, I would argue that the story of the

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extended Durrell family in India should not be seen as an apologia for Empire – or as a condemnation of it. Rather, I believe it invites an investigation of the course of exile, exile presented in the diverging views of a family caught up in revolutionary change in a land at once beloved while remaining to an extent alien to them. This is often an integral part of the experience of exile.

As it was for me. I was born in what was then the Dutch colony of Suriname; for years all my friends were brown or black, I lived in four languages (I spoke English only with my parents), in a non-literate society without electricity; the music I heard was atonal. All this felt profoundly normal.

Are we not all defined by what seems to us normal? Marlow's critical distance from the aims of the Belgian colonisers anticipates the ambivalence shown by Larry Durrell towards Britain and the English, even while he was making his living as a Crown servant, a vocation he often referred to as his "fifteen years of solitary in the F[oreign].O[ffice]." And his attitude towards the Empire under whose aegis he had been born was indicated by his rejection of a proffered OBE.[2] Larry's tongue-in-cheek flippancy with regard to political and indeed often to moral questions, his scepticism over the Greeks' ability to run a country efficiently, were important considerations in his choice to settle in France rather than in Greece. His father was far less critical: as a devoted technocrat, he was fascinated by the advance of British industry, when he finally was able to see it for himself.

Larry Durrell liked to pretend that his early adherence to the British Empire was unqualified. "*Kim* was our bedside book", he often asserted. This was a convenient catchphrase, intended to evoke a warm response in his British public. (Remember also that by the time he had become a best-selling author he had added fifteen years as a British diplomat to his dossier: the watchword of the Foreign Office, *toujours la politesse*, had become a habit.) Yes, I am sure that the Durrells *did* read Kipling, and most of the family *did* accept the purpose of the Raj. And many of his forebears did serve the British Raj, as army officers and administrators. His paternal grandfather ended his long military career as Major Samuel Durrell, returning to England to die in 1914, in Portsmouth. Whether or not the Durrells admitted it privately, they were part of an army of occupation, and whether or not they were in active *military* service, they were part of the roughly 160,000 British or British-descended

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[2] Order of the British Empire.

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people charged with keeping India part of the Empire and keeping about 300 million Indians quiet.

From well before the failed Indian War of Independence of 1857 – with semantic cleverness called "The Sepoy Mutiny" by British historians – there was a definite revolutionary movement. This ongoing conflict was faced by Lawrence Samuel Durrell. To his credit, he appears to have been fair in his dealings with Indians, even to taking their side in some disputes involving members of his own family.

The *British* India that would nurture the Durrells had come into being through the exploits of Robert Clive, who served with the British East India Trading Company from age eighteen. At three English schools he had gained an unsavoury reputation for being "out of measure addicted to fighting",[3] yet he gave early evidence of initiative: in the town of Market Drayton he led a gang of toughs in setting up a protection racket. In desperation over his misbehaviour his father sent him to India in 1743. During his second tour of service in India, in 1757, Clive, commanding a small army of Company men, had defeated the French-backed Nawab of Bengal, at the time India's richest state, thus creating the basis of the Raj and of British rule on the subcontinent. For this master-stroke he was rewarded with the lump sum of £234,000, or about 200 million in today's pounds. Soon he became one of the richest men in England.

For many centuries, war and exile – self-exile or the involuntary variety brought about by deportation, transportation, or penal servitude – had led the English to populate distant corners of the globe. Exiled British took root in North America, Guyana, Australia, New Zealand, India, Rhodesia and other parts of Africa.

The last and perhaps the strangest of all breeds of British exiles were those who helped create South Africa, now a still-evolving experiment in a bi-racial nation. It was to this amalgam of a future nation that Gandhi, unable to establish himself as a lawyer in India, exiled himself for twenty-one years, developing the ideas and non-violent activism that would ultimately defeat the plans for India of those other exiles, Clive, Curzon, and the Durrells. *British* India was indeed a country of a minute proportion of exiles from the British Isles, who were largely of two types – those whose aim from the very first was to make a financial killing in short order and retire to Bournemouth; and those who took root, who came to regard India as home, who married there, raised families, and were frequently buried there. Among these were Samuel Durrell and Lawrence Samuel Durrell, grandfather and father respectively of the novelist.

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[3] Alexander John Arbuthnot, *Lord Clive*, p. 305.

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What Lord Clive had achieved with insolent ease in the eighteenth century, the forces of the British Empire would spend the nineteenth and half of the twentieth centuries trying to hold onto. Exactly one hundred years after Clive's triumph, the Sepoy troops at Meerut rebelled, and their War of Independence quickly spread to the upper Gangetic plain, to the Punjab, to central India.

The rebellion came as a great shock to the Company officers, some of whom had married Indian princesses; and most of whom had trusted Indian subordinates. The rebels had butchered even British women and children in certain cities. Company troops responded rapidly, and Kanpur, Gwalior, and Delhi were retaken within a year, often with horrendous reprisals. Eventually, the British granted amnesty to all "not involved in murder". In addition, the civil administration initiated important road and railway building operations that greatly increased the mobility of the average Indian – and the ease with which troops could be moved to trouble spots. Through a concerted programme of canal digging, millions of acres were irrigated and brought into cultivation, reducing the endemic problem of famine.

Lawrence Samuel Durrell, who had been born in India, began his career in the midst of this vast programme of infrastructure development. He earned a two-year diploma in basic engineering at the Thomason Engineering College in Roorkee. Immediately on graduation in 1904, he entered the State Railway Service, laid track for the North-Western Railway, based in Lahore; spent two years bridging the treacherous Sutlej River in the northern Punjab; was promoted to District Engineer at Karnal where he constructed the King Edward Memorial Hospital; blasted tunnels through rock in Buthidaung, Burma; was placed in charge of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. Ironically, Lawrence Samuel's important contribution to railway expansion speeded up the unification of the nation and in consequence the end of British rule.

While the British Raj was attempting to reinvent itself as a benevolent uncle, the Indian Congress Party was founded, and its key demand was for *svaraj*, self-rule. Then World War One arrived, and the enthusiastic response of nearly the entire Indian population surprised and delighted the government in Whitehall. In all, 1,440,413 Indians volunteered for service. Lawrence Samuel offered to lead an Indian labour force in France but was told to stick with the Indian railways. Most Indians assumed that some form of self-government would be their reward for supporting the "Mother Country".

It was not to be. Twelve million Indians died in the influenza outbreak that began in 1918, for which Gandhi blamed British incompetence.

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(As I write this, I am painfully aware that tens of thousands worldwide are dying in the coronavirus/Covid-19 outbreak, a death count certainly exacerbated by the gross incompetence of leadership in the USA, Britain, and certain other countries.) Then in 1919 Brigadier-General Dyer at Amritsar in the Punjab opened fire on a peaceful crowd of thousands of pilgrims gathered in an enclosed space at Jallianwala Bagh. In ten minutes his men fired exactly 1,650 rounds, killing over 400 and injuring another 1200. He was relieved of his command, but later was given a sword engraved with the words “Saviour of the Punjab”, further infuriating the Indians. From this time on, the days of the Raj were counted in strikes, riots, Gandhi’s non-violent *satyagraha* (soul force) movement, and impassioned speeches by Indian parliamentarians.

Perhaps spurred on by the tragedy at Jallianwala Bagh, Lawrence Samuel resigned from the railway service the following year to form his own construction company, Durrell & Co. He must have assumed – as did many young Englishmen – that India would not continue for long to be British. And his company inevitably helped prepare India for economic independence. He would undertake various construction projects for the Tata enterprises, founded by the Parsi Jamsetji Tata, who is celebrated as the father of Indian industry. In the course of his last great initiative, he had journeyed in 1902 to Pittsburgh seeking advice about locating and establishing India’s first steel plant. He decided on the Chota Nagpur plateau, where the bright red soil is rich in iron ore.

Old Tata had died two years later, but his son Ratan turned to Lawrence Samuel for many major construction projects, awarding him contracts to build the general office complex in Jamshedpur, then recently named in honour of Jamsetji Tata, as well as a tinplate rolling mill, a factory to fabricate wire cable, a sand-lime brick plant, and an enamelled ironware operation. In the five years that it took to complete all this for the Tatas, Durrell & Co. also constructed bridges, embankments, and laid thirty miles of track for the Bengal-Nagpur Railway.[4] The total gross value of these completed projects came to £690,000, or approximately £1.5 billion in 2020 pounds. Soon Jamshedpur became known as the Pittsburgh of India, in no small measure due to Lawrence Samuel’s work. But despite the astounding success of his company, he was far from satisfied with his life in India, and he quarrelled with his brother-in-law and business partner, John Dixie. Dixie resigned from the firm, and the quarrel was never made up. (Members of the family told me that this quarrel stemmed from an industrial accident that had resulted in loss of life. Dixie blamed

[4] [Lawrence Samuel Durrell], *Construction Work in India 1921-1925.*

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the two Sikh partners in the firm, while Lawrence Samuel had held the Sikhs blameless.)

Unusual for corporations anywhere at the time, the Parsi Tatas felt an obligation for the welfare of their employees, and Lawrence Samuel undertook to build 386 flats in the compound for factory workers and fifty-eight staff bungalows. Larry Durrell's youngest brother, Gerry, would be born in one of these, called Beldih House.

The capstone of the projects to improve the health of the employees was a sprawling hospital building. Susan MacNiven and I had arrived in Jamshedpur with no contacts, but I had heard about the hospital and so I headed for it. A rifle-carrying guard stood at the main entrance, and he was stopping everyone without a pass. I returned to our hotel and came back in a white shirt and carrying a large manila envelope. I walked briskly straight at the guard, who saluted and held the door for me. I toured the entire hospital.

I need not have worried. Such was the friendliness that we encountered in Jamshedpur and indeed throughout India that we soon had many eager helpers. By Susan's count, within twenty-four hours we had twenty-five people helping us in Jamshedpur, including the manager of the Tata truck division, and a retired Sikh foreman who took us to interview a 102-year-old Sikh who had held the ice franchise back in the 1920s and who actually remembered Lawrence Samuel Durrell. Very few knew of Durrell the writer.

By all accounts, Lawrence Samuel had excellent relations with all Indians, including those he employed, whether they were highly skilled Sikh engine drivers and technicians, or untamed Pathans from Afghanistan, men with a reputation for being unruly.

The India that Susan and I visited in 1991 had long been independent, but tensions of class, wealth distribution, caste, and religion remained. While we were welcomed, and never felt in the least threatened, it was clear to us that ancient grievances remained. The Sikh princes in the Punjab had remained loyal to the British during the 1857 rebellion. We found ourselves in the midst of another Sikh uprising against the government, and our westward progress toward Jullundur, Larry Durrell's birthplace, was punctuated by frequent banner headlines: "Fourteen Sikhs Killed at Roorkee" read one. In Jullundur we met a newspaper editor, who sent us in his bullet-proof car to visit a very old lawyer, Mr. Chopra – "My son was shot dead a few months ago", the editor explained. The car smelled so strongly of raw gasoline that Susan and I debated opening the windows. "If they can see that we are only a couple of silly white people, they probably won't shoot", she argued. We rolled down the windows.

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Lawyer Chopra told us about a court case involving Larry's uncle Cecil Henry Buck,[5] a trial that Buck lost, which led to his retiring to England – and which probably encouraged Lawrence Samuel to consider moving to his ancestral homeland.

Lawrence Samuel came to England (for the first time) in 1923 to place Larry in a school, and, having enthusiastically taken part in amateur musicals in India, discovered the delights of London comic operettas. Perhaps the most successful star in this genre was Evelyn Laye, who had burst onto the London stage in 1916 at age fifteen. According to his eldest son, this was when Lawrence Samuel dreamed of abandoning India and re-inventing himself as the leading man opposite Evelyn Laye. Perhaps he hoped that she might be the Beatrice-like figure to guide the "exile" home.

By then he must have been convinced that the structure of the old Raj would not endure much longer, even though there was now a rumour that the British would grant India Dominion status within the Empire. This rumour came too late for him. He returned to India, hoping to recreate in Lahore the triumphs of Jamshedpur. Instead he began to act strangely – "he drank the ink instead of the whisky", Larry said. In April 1928 his father died of an apparent cerebral haemorrhage, and a shattered Louisa Durrell buried him in the small English cemetery outside Dalhousie. There, I found his grave, by then only a slab of stone with the inscription missing, facing the foothills of the stupendous Himalayas.

Years later his son was to invoke Evelyn Laye. In 1949, having just sent the text of his drama, *Sappho*, to T.S. Eliot, his editor at Faber and Faber, Larry Durrell wrote to Eliot that his choice for the casting of his heroine was Laye,[6] surely an odd choice given the comedic roles for which the actress was famous, but one perhaps dictated by the guilt Larry felt all his life for not having lived up to his father's expectations for him.

Larry Durrell was probably *not* inventing his father's impulse to become an exile from the only country he had known from his birth. Operetta fantasy or not, English actress or not, Lawrence Samuel, like his son, possessed that wild gene that drove him and others like him to dream of Elsewhere, propelled in his case by his growing realisation that the Raj would not last. This realisation he had then shoved aside, and clung instead to the career in the Raj that he knew, over the risks of a totally different venture in another country of exile.

Larry Durrell himself would be mightily afflicted with this dream of Elsewhere, but it would not hit him until he had been forcibly exiled

[5] Author of *Faiths, Fairs, and Festivals of India* (1917) and nephew of Sir Edward J Buck, author of *Simla, Past and Present* (1904).

[6] L Durrell to T S Eliot, March 1949 (Coll. Faber and Faber).

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north to school, away from the Kiplingesque world that he had been born into. It was a world that had seemed to him fixed and stable. But as he rode on the train bearing him to the ship that would take him to England, the bogies clicking over the rails seemed to say to him "Never-come-back, never-come-back, never-come-back".[7] For the boy, being sent to England was not a homecoming but an exile, an exile for which he blamed his father. Lawrence Samuel had wanted his son to obtain a good degree from a major English university, then return to India "a great man with an expensive dinner jacket".[8] Then his father's death at age forty-three decreed that Larry's exile from India would be permanent. But Larry brought with him in his exile several of the vernaculars of India; the faces, forms, and hues of myriad peoples; the flavours of Indian curries; the songs of the Punjab, of Oudh, of Nepal and Tibet and Arakan Burma. All these he stored in the capacious godown of his memory.

It may sound like exotic baggage, these memories, but for a colonial youth it has a bitter-sweet taste. The Greeks have a phrase for it: *nostos-algos*, the pain for home, severe homesickness, nostalgia. I too was exiled from a tropic world I knew and loved to become a ward of schoolmasters and strangers. Read Kipling's "Baa Baa, Black Sheep", about his bitter experience of being a child exiled from India, if you would know more of this peculiar suffering.

Larry Durrell's apprentice years as a writer he would spend in various "exiles". It was in his bloodstream: "We have got the refugee habit", he would lament.[9] He wrote poems about his state, poems in the voices of various avatars – think of "Conon in Exile", and of "Exile in Athens":

> To be a king of islands,
> Share a boundary with eagles.
> . . . .
> Here alone in a stone city
> I sing the rock, the sea-squill,
> Over Greece the one punctual star.[10]

This "refugee habit" would mark Larry for life. For one thing, he hated to travel – even though he would write travel pieces for *Holiday* magazine and one unabashed travel book, *Sicilian Carousel*. But when he set out to evoke a people or a landscape he loved, it was about residing in

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[7] L Durrell, *Pied Piper of Lovers*, p. 15.
[8] L Durrell, "From the Elephant's Back".
[9] In the poem "In Europe" (*Collected Poems*, p. 140) - see above, pp. 205-209.
[10] "Exile in Athens", *Collected Poems*, p. 112.

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a place, it was about the *spirit of the place*, not merely travelling through it. A true exile, when he left one country, India and soon after, England – he looked at once for a home, and found Corfu, found Provence.

When he moved to Corfu in 1935, he was seeking, I am sure, those elements of a remembered and idealised India. To reconstitute those elements of India that he so missed when he had been exiled as a schoolboy to "Pudding Island", he had to bring his mother and his siblings along. One family member, of course, was missing: his father. His father had brought, for young Larry, the appearance of stability amid the turmoil of India. Against his will, Larry found himself cast as the father-figure to his brothers and his sister. This transfer seemed to work only with Gerry as far as Larry was concerned, and it worked because Gerry was practically adopted by Theodore Stephanides, the only person in their circle who could keep pace with his zoological mania.

Because Stephanides could take over, largely, the responsibility of furthering Gerry's scientific development, Larry was free to pursue his own life and art. *The Magnetic Island* – published in 2019 by the Durrell Library of Corfu – was in draft form the beginning of Larry Durrell's Greek poems, and of the Levantine cast of much of his fiction from then on. The full implications of *Magnetic Island* for Larry's oeuvre are beyond the scope of this essay, but I see it as the embryonic impulse of which *Panic Spring* and *Prospero's Cell* form parts of the continuum.

Exile, the compulsive crossing of borders, might have been in Larry's bloodstream, and the theme appeared, naturally, in much of what he wrote. His writing ran parallel to his physical life, not surprisingly. As he was putting the polishing touches on *Justine*, Larry commenced writing *Bitter Lemons*, that well-named saga of a tragically divided island, with an internal border fragmenting a once-single island community. In a poignant reminder that human beings can triumph over political strife, in writing my biography of Larry Durrell I was entertained by Greeks married to Turks, and I crossed the Green Line into Nicosia to see Sabri Tahir, the skillful negotiator who managed Larry's purchase of his villa in Bellapaix, Cyprus. Sabri received Susan and me warmly as we were escorted in by a pair of bodyguards. He was in a wheelchair – he had lost a leg after being kneecapped by a "business associate." I was not to see Sabri again. Six months later Sabri's enemies finished the job: he was shot dead.

I recall also the departure from Cyprus of Larry Durrell and Claude Vincendon, who would become his third wife. Seeing them off in a bus heading for the port was Penelope Tremayne, the English nurse and author who would take over the Bellapaix villa from Larry. She told me that he had slid open the bus window and tossed her his pistol, saying

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only, “Here! You may need this!” (I throw out these anecdotes of the borderlands to suggest that Larry often lived his fiction!)

In his *Alexandria Quartet*, in *The Revolt of Aphrodite*, and in his *Quintet* he peopled his fictions with exiles he had known or with those suggested by his acquaintances, exiles from all over the Levant, from Greece, from Palestine. In *The Avignon Quintet* in particular he evoked the exiles of the distant past, the Cathars, Crusaders, and Templars. That is an important part of his genius, his ability to make us *believe* that he knows what Narouz, that throwback to a feudal Egypt, actually feels.

The tension between the Indian actuality that Lawrence Samuel Durrell found himself inescapably a part of, and the England of his imagination, destroyed him, I think. His son was more resilient. For years I wondered why Pierre, the asylum attendant in *Sebastian*, is identified, in quotes, only as the “Malabar”. Then recently I learned that in 1921, not so long before young Larry was “exiled” to England and school, the Moplah sect of nearby Malabar had declared a jihad in response to the heavy-handed British suppression of the Caliphate movement. Englishmen and wealthy Hindus were killed, and in the brutal reaction of the authorities an estimated 10,000 died – an event certainly discussed in the Durrell household. Many years later, still haunted by exile, Larry has the lunatic Mnemidis kill off the “Malabar”, laying yet again one of the ghosts of his lost India.

Lawrence Durrell’s exile may have been painful, yet it was hardly in vain. Out of the experience of exile he proceeded to build his world, stone upon stone, word upon word.

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