

EDITORIAL

Crossing American Borders

This issue of *Cairo Studies in English (CSE)* entitled “Crossing American Borders” includes some articles that were presented at the 14th International Symposium on Comparative Literature held by the Department of English Language and Literature in 2018 which had as its theme “Writing Across Borders”. Some of the papers in this issue were presented during that symposium, while others have been written specifically for the issue. In addition, the volume has a special section dedicated to “Emerging Voices” that includes chapters from MA or PhD dissertations that are considered eligible for publication, before the defence of the theses. All the papers fall within the domain of American Studies but deal with topics such as: immigration, migration, exile, diaspora, transnationalism and hyphenated identities.

A few papers deal with problems faced by immigrants in America particularly, the question of identity such as in Marwa Fawzy’s paper, “Indian-American Identity Negotiation: Placing the Self in Domestic and Public Spaces”. In this paper the concept of a hyphenated identity emerges from the character’s past in the homeland combined with its present in the host land, America. This diasporic experience is analyzed using Ajit K. Maan’s model of in “Internarrative Identity” in Bharati Mukherjee’s *Jasmine* and Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*.

In “(Un)Leash the Self: Exploring Frontiers in (Re)writing America”, Reem El Degwi, through an analysis of Julia Alvarez’s *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* and Sandra Cisneros’ *The House on Mango Street*, contends that the protagonists of the two literary works manage their hyphenated identities and overcome problems pertaining to “American exceptionalism”, a term that is extensively discussed in the paper. The writer also alludes to the transnational dimension of literature, specifically American literature.

Dalia Hamed in her paper “Identity Negotiation through Positioning in two Selected Short Stories from Darraj’s *The Inheritance of Exile*” applies positioning theory and discourse analysis theories to Darraj’s collection of short stories. Through the use of the above-mentioned theories Hamed demonstrates how characters in the stories negotiate their hyphenated identities as Arab Americans. Further, the author aims at showing the different ways first generation and second generation Arab Americans perceive the two components of their hyphenated identities.

Ingy Hassan's "They're Just Like Everybody Else: A Postcolonial Reading of Rohina Malik's *Yasmina's Necklace*" is, as indicated in the title, a postcolonial reading of the Pakistani writer Rohina Malik's play, *Yasmina's Necklace*, based on Edward Said's and W. E. B. Du Bois' approaches to the stereotyping of Muslims and Arabs in the post 9/11 era in the United States. The paper also makes use of Foucault's theory dealing with the relationship of knowledge to power. The different attitudes of the Arab and Muslim characters in the play regarding their stereotyping is explained in the light of the above theories, emphasizing the fact that stereotyping contributes to creating a double-consciousness on the part of its victims who tend to see themselves from the colonizer's point of view as well as that of their own as colonized.

In her paper, "Emotion as a Border: A Reading of NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*", Fadwa Mahmoud Hassan Gad discusses Bulawayo's work in the light of three theories: namely, Sara Ahmed's macro approach to the phenomenon of borders based on hate and fear as boundaries; Gloria Anzaldúa's micro analysis of the border crossing as a condition that entails mixed emotions, and Victor Konrad's theory of mobility that involves processes of debordering/rebordering. The paper focuses on the emotions of hate, fear and anger as the main motivations for action in the case of the diasporic existence of Africans in America in the post 9/11 era.

A couple of papers deal with crossing borders of literary genres, for instance Saeed Gazar in his paper "Haiku as a Transcultural Genre: Trajectories of Crisscrossing Japanese-American Borders" analyzes some of the haikus of major Japanese poets and others by American poets from the Beat Generation to show how some of the haiku's qualities such as alterity, *shasei* and free association have enabled it to cross cultural borders not only in the United States of America but in many parts of the world, including the Arab World.

Similarly, "*In the Blood: A Contemporary American Common (Wo)man Tragedy*", Dina Amin discusses the way the play crosses the borders of the Aristotelian tragedy to present the protagonist as an African-American woman. Amin asserts that Lori-Parks manages to use the elements of classic tragedy in her play to portray the plight of this poor African-American woman who defies any attempt at stereotyping her.

Sahar Elmougy's paper, "Performance Poetry as a Performative Act: A Close Listening to Andrea Gibson's Poetry", is a study of the way performance poetry crosses different social and political borders through challenging mainstream cultural constructs. An analysis of two performance poems by Andrea Gibson reveals the anti-authoritarian and subversive power of performance poetry. The

paper also lives up to its objective of giving voice to the marginalized by subverting the language itself to match the gender identity of the poet.

An interdisciplinary study by Amal Ibrahim Kamel under the title: “Exploring the Metabolic Rift: An Eco-Marxist Reading of Sam Shepard’s *The God of Hell*” discusses the concept of the human being as a component of nature, not as a separate entity. An eco-Marxist approach is used to analyze the different elements of the play including characters, dialogue, non-verbal communication, stage directions, lighting, and setting.

In addition to the above papers, there are four papers by “emerging voices”, two of which are concerned with crossing borders through life-writing and the other two with the question of identity. Fatma Massoud in her paper, “Life-Writing and Autofiction in Radwa Ashour’s *The Journey*” analyzes Ashour’s academic journey, as a Ph.D. student, from Egypt to America. The writer shows how the book crosses borders not only between nations and cultures but also between genres including autobiography, autofiction and travel writing.

Fatima Ramy’s paper, “Crossing Borders in Uniform: The Construction of Subjectivity in a Post 9/11 Blogosphere” focusses on the diaries of soldiers who fought in the Middle East. Ramy through the perspectives of these soldiers, presents an alternative narrative of the war, from that of the politicians and the mainstream media.

Nada Ghazi’s “The Transnational Self across Borders: A Comparative Study of Kiran Desai and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie” asserts that both Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* manage to adopt a flexible attitude towards migration that challenges nationalist essentialism. The comparison in the two works proves that the two writers are in favour of a hybridized identity that manages to transcend the national to a transnational existence.

Nagwa Ibrahim Dawoud in her paper: “Crossing American Borders, Reclaiming Palestinian National and Cultural Identity in Ibrahim Fawal’s *On the Hills of God*”. attempts to deconstruct the colonial discourse of the Israeli occupation concerning the Palestinian national and cultural identity. The paper, also touches upon issues related to crossing both geographical and psychological borders of America, a land of exile.

This volume also includes a review, written by Sonia Farid, of Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s important book, *Documenting the Undocumented: Latino/a Narratives and Social Justice in the Era of Operation Gatekeeper* (2016). The book includes a collection of both fictional and non-fictional experiences of crossing the American border by Mexican and Caribbean

immigrants in the era of Operation Gatekeeper as is stated in the subtitle of the book. According to Farid, the book manages to present different aspects of those experiences, including trauma and testimonies, which are not only used for the purpose of documentation, but also for empowering these immigrants as well, through giving them a voice and letting their suffering be known to the world.

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