

An Introduction to Lives in Migration: Rupture and Continuity

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Editor

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This electronic book is a result of a small research project bearing the same title, funded by the University of Barcelona and carried out by this University's Australian Studies Centre (*Centre d'Estudis Australians CEA*) in 2010. The collection of essays in English and Spanish presented here is the research group members' reflection on the theme of migration from a variety of fields within the Humanities, so as to create as broad and objective a theoretical base as possible to look at its contemporary manifestations. It makes for a study that takes into account the socio-historical, cultural, political and geographic factors involved in migration, which attempts to offer a framework for analysing the current migratory situation in Catalonia, Spain and Europe at large. As this project's proposal came from the University of Barcelona Australian Studies Centre, the paradigmatic point of departure for our approach is the Australian experience, a settler nation with a long experience and history of cross-cultural contact within the nation-space through colonisation, migration, assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and so on. We therefore believe that the Australian experience offers relevant insights for our European context, to which the intercultural nature of the nation-state is relatively new; in establishing this intercontinental link, we would also like to highlight the global character of migratory phenomena and the resulting need that the issues raised by migration be dealt with from such a global perspective, beyond the socio-political comfort the traditional nation-state provides for the people who inhabit its discursive limits.

While migration has always formed part of human history and has involved smaller and larger groups of people and communities, sometimes even nations, the phenomenon has become increasingly global since the beginning of the last century, due to widespread war, famine, genocide, colonialism and imperialism, climate change, poverty, political and religious persecution and so on. As a demographic development of global, supranational impact, it is therefore imperative that its motivations and consequences are studied in depth. Indeed, the reasons for migration are as varied as its consequences for host societies, which tend to display a split attitude towards the newcomers. Nowadays we speak of multicultural and multiracial countries in a globalised world, but under the polite veneer of inviting host societies, racism and the violation of human rights often lurk. This justifies a research perspective from within the Humanities, such as history, literature and art, to focus on the polemics involved in culture clash, migration and gender, 'double' exile, the recognition of the migrants cultural roots, the recovery of silenced voices, and the psychological dependence on the home country or ancestral place of origin.

Plenty has been published on migration within a limited socio-historic scope of problems and consequences, such as the social restructuring of the host society, the help needed by different groups of migrants, and the obstacles migrants tend to encounter in the process of integration. Yet, an important rationale behind our project is the need to broaden the analytical perspective synchronically and diachronically, so as to respond adequately to the issues derived from Spain and Catalonia's incipient multiculturalism—here, multicultural co-existence has been in swing for two decades at most—and the growing notion that migration is more than a social phenomenon alone. Historically speaking, migration is negatively associated with moments of social instability and crisis, but we believe that (the analysis of) intercultural tension and friction may also lead to (the discovery of) new, potentially enriching social structures. Thus, we hope that our essays contribute to new understandings of each other across cultures.

The essays have been ordered into three sections so as link them thematically and enhance their readability intertextually. Thus, the first section provides a theoretical and historical framework to analyse migration. The second section explores the Australian experience of migration across a wide variety of cultural parameters as paradigmatic cases of intercultural contact and existence. The last section pulls different national experiences together in comparative studies.

In the first section, Sue Ballyn proposes a theoretical and historical framework of migration in chapter 1, entitled *The Why and the "Therefore" of Human Migration. A Brief Overview*. Given that human beings have been on the move from the time Homo Sapiens Sapiens spread out from Africa, she highlights that migration has always formed part of human history and demography, converting it into an essential object of study to understand humanity. Her chapter focuses on a wide range of issues such as: how do we define migration? What classifications of migration exist? What are the factors that contribute to migration? What kinds of migration are we dealing with today? What are the consequences of migration? What actually constitutes refugee and exile status in international law and with regard to human rights? Sue Ballyn also looks at cases of forced migration such as the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia, the Banaban people from the Kiribati Islands, the Chagos islanders from the Indian Ocean and specific migrant groups such as the Rohingya people from Burma. She finishes with an overview of what lies ahead of us in terms of climate migration and how the matter should be addressed before it is too late and peoples across the world find themselves not only without their homeland but also in a limbo as neither refugees nor stateless but rather displaced people with nowhere to go.

In the second section, Sue Ballyn follows up on her theoretical framework with a brief overview of the transportation of convicts to Australia, the consequences that arose from it and a brief description of the convict system. In chapter 2, *The British Invasion of Australia. Convicts: Exile and Dislocation*, she takes us back to those years of forced migration to Australia when the convict and transportation system were in full swing to empty the United Kingdom of its impoverished metropolitan rejects, whether male or female. However, she also goes beyond the scope of British class cleansing by including convicts of other national origins, who had ended up in the claws of the British legal system. A key tool in documenting the particular nature of convict transportation is the journals of convict transport surgeons who treated prisoners on the long voyage from Europe to the Antipodes. Allowing us an approximation to the convict's voice and life, these accounts provide an awareness of the hard, often terrible circumstances involved in the journey of migration, reminiscent of the hardships suffered by Africans crossing the Strait of Gibraltar to Europe in wholly inadequate means and uses of sea transport.

In chapter 3, *The Stolen Generations, a Narrative of Removal, Displacement and Recovery*, Martin Renes addresses one of the most painful experiences the Indigenous Australian population has been the object of under white colonisation. The expression “The Stolen Generations” refers to one of the most tragic results of the protection policies imposed upon Indigenous Australians by state and church institutions for reasons of doubtful scientific value and quality, but given ample credit in Western society in a still recent past. As ‘protection’ was founded on the Social-Darwinist belief that the Indigenous Australian was doomed to extinction but that mixed Aboriginal descent could be saved and assimilated into white society, it should therefore come as no surprise that these protective measures are now studied as instances of genocide, related to the policies of Jewish extermination generated during the Holocaust. It is nowadays evident that the West’s civilising zeal and eugenic theory have had a devastating impact on all aspects of the Aboriginal community tissue. The lasting trauma of the Stolen Generations was the result of the institutionalisation, adoption, fostering, virtual slavery and sexual abuse of thousands of mixed-descent children, who were separated at great physical and emotional distances from their Indigenous kin, often never to see them again. The object of state and Federal policy of removal and assimilation into the mainstream between 1930 and 1970, these lost children saw their plight only officially recognised in 1997, when the *Bringing Them Home* report was published by the Federal government, which broke part of the ‘great Australian silence’ (Stanner) on Indigenous history. It is evident that these victims of forced migration have suffered serious, transgenerational problems of adaptation and alienation, not only documented in the aforementioned report but also in Indigenous Australian literature over the last three decades. Martin Renes’s chapter traces the imprint of the Stolen Generations in literature by looking at four representative Western-Australian authors, and places their plight within the larger neocolonial predicament of Australia’s First Nations. Analysing the impact of European settlement as an act of invasion, it suggests ways to approach interculturality within the same nation-space from a non-assimilative perspective.

In chapter 4, entitled *Looking Through Their Eyes*, Elisa Morera de la Vall looks at the Jewish migratory experience in Australia through the literature Jewish writers have produced in situ, in successive waves back to the convict days. In the firm belief that literature helps us to understand immigrant lives, she quotes Louise Rorabacher (1976), who wrote that the charm of, and intellectual satisfaction derived from official statistics cannot compete with the appeal to the heart provided by fiction, which charts out the width and depth of human experience in migration—homesickness, painful adaptation, bitter disillusion, and eventual failure or success. Morera looks at the different waves of Jewish immigration; the literature these produced; the life experiences it depicts in terms of intercultural dis/trust, adaptation and co-existence; and the Jewish contribution to the Australian nation. She awards special attention to the current debate on clandestine immigration in Australia from the perspective of Jewish-Australian writers such as Arnold Zable, whose own or parents’ experience can add valuable contributions. As with the previous chapters, Morera’s account of Jewish-Australian fiction homes in on the violence often underlying migration, locking into the genocidal drift of Aboriginal protection policies described above.

Chapter 5 by Catalina Ribas Segura, *Lives Broken by the Tiananmen Square Massacre: Consequences in Chinese-Australian Literature*, addresses the Tiananmen Square Massacre (3-4 June 1989) as the main focus of tension between the authoritarian Chinese government and its oppressed citizens, and analyses how Chinese emigration to Australia is affected by this event. As the Massacre became a turning point in the relations between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and most Western countries due to the brutality of its repression and persistent censorship, the Australian government allowed Chinese students to remain in the country if they feared repression at home. This historical event is explored in the two Chinese-Australian novels dealt with in this chapter, Frank

Chan Loh's *When Dining with Tigers. Roads to Tiananmen* and Lillian Ng's *Swallowing Clouds*. The chapter starts out describing the nature of bilateral relations between China and Australia since the latter's colonisation, explores the Massacre and its consequences for the Chinese in Australia, and analyses the two novels within the new political and legal context affecting migration while also addressing the importance of gender for the development of the main characters on their outbound journey from China. Ribas's account brings to attention an issue that cannot be stressed enough in processes of migration: the different chances of integration, opportunities for improvement and perception of the migratory experience according to gender.

In chapter 6, *Migration in Australian Detective Fiction*, Bill Phillips picks up on recent academic interest for popular fiction, and looks at the genre of detective fiction in the Australian context. Both in terms of production and readership, detective fiction is very popular and its discourse(s) therefore potentially influential in shaping readership perception of Australian society. Phillips' chapter analyses the common denominators linking migration and crime as described in the novels of Peter Corris, John Dale, Shane Maloney, Philip McLaren and Peter Temple. For historical and demographical reasons people of European origin play an important part, almost always inscribed in national stereotypes regarding their propensity for certain types of crime. Geographical proximity awards Asians important presence as well, rooted in national stereotypes as regards organised crime. Revealing for Australian attitudes towards their 'minor neighbour', New Zealand only appears occasionally and as a quiet, crimeless backwater, and for historical and geographical reasons the Americas and Africa appear hardly at all in Australian crime fiction. Phillips also awards attention to the case of the Indigenous Australians in detective fiction, which deals with their history of racism, dispossession, disempowerment and removal under white colonisation. Phillips' chapter shows that the propensity for, and association with crime as uncivil behaviour should not be restricted to non-dominant groups but affects the Australian population as a whole, independent of their origins or creed, which is a notion to take into account in our European context.

In chapter 7, entitled *Migración y Contextos Multiculturales: Literaturas de Origen Srilanqués en Canadá y Australia*, Isabel Alonso addresses the case of Sri-Lankan literature written in exile. Sri Lanka became independent from the Britain in 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War when the Empire was falling into swift decay. In 1956, Cingalese substituted English as the official language, and soon frictions arose between the Cingalese majority and the major minority group, the Tamil. The following decades were very unstable in terms of ethnic coexistence, leading up to a bloody civil war at the beginning of the 1980s; it would last until 2009 when the remaining Tamil guerrilla forces were killed and their leader captured. This 30-year-long conflict was the cause of one of the largest diasporas of our times. The exodus is mostly of Tamil origin, and is directed towards several countries, most importantly Australia and Canada, which stand out for their firm advance towards national sovereignty as well as their multicultural policies as of the 1960s, coinciding with the arrival of most Sri-Lankan immigrants. Alonso looks into Sri-Lankan literature produced in these countries from the premise that this work should have much in common, given Canada and Australia's similarities. Her emphasis is on literary texts written by authors born in the motherland, and less on second-generation immigrants, born in Canada or Australia. Yet, despite their migratory background, these authors do not insistently but still regularly address migration, their motherland, the relationship between Sri Lanka and the host society, or the process of multicultural adaptation in their work. Alonso's assesment of twenty-two different writers of Sri-Lankan background conveys a simple multicultural experience and truth, exportable to Europe: "there is no 'pure belonging'; there is no 'pure' diaspora. What we must contend with, instead, are

types of belonging and uprooting, affirmations and denials of identity, sameness and difference” (Paranjape 2001: 11).

In chapter 8, entitled *La Representación Artística del Inmigrante y su Desarrollo Argumental: del Dibujo al Video-Arte*, Jaime de Córdoba Benedicto takes us upon a boundary-transgressing journey through the work of several artists, who all have to come to terms with their origins and/or present cultural location in a certain context of expatriateness. De Córdoba analyses work by Marià Fortuny, a well-known mid-nineteenth century painter from Catalonia who spent long periods in Morocco; by Jean Michel Basquiat, the Afro-American painter of Haitian and Puerto Rican roots turned into a self-defeating American success story in the 1980s; by Richard Avedon, the Jewish-American photographer who famously recorded stark, powerful images of migrant lives around the USA in his work; and by William Kentridge, a white South-African draughtsman *cum* video artist who offers a sobering, distancing comment on pre and post-apartheid society in his work. These artists have in common that they forge a sense of (un)belonging and (mis)communication applying sketching, painting, photography and video art to divergent cultural universes as the means to overcome Difference and reach out to the Other. De Córdoba’s interpretation of these artist’s work and lives beckons towards open-mindedness and therefore locates the configuration of our identities in the crucible of transculturality.

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