

Mapping the Self

Mapping the Self

Place, Identity, Nationality

Edited by

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Mapping the Self: Place, Identity, Nationality

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FOREWORD

ALEX GOODY

“As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.” Virginia Woolf’s rejection of the claims of nationality in *Three Guineas*, linking the demands of the nation state to the tyrannies of patriarchy and fascism, resonated across the twentieth century and empowered many of the peace activists who, mid-century, sought to resist the intensification of conflict across the globe. In our contemporary world, beset as in the previous century by hostilities that divide it into opposing zones and clashing ideologies, the nomadic subject that Woolf invokes seems of heightened relevance. The nation state remains, however, both an enabling concept for peoples seeking to claim autonomy and self-identity and a troubling assertion of homogeneity based on the exigencies of place and history. The nation is a space of co-existence and contestation.

It is never easy to redefine such a disputed term as “nation” and the essays included in this volume contribute to the historic and ongoing debate about the relationship between identity and geography, whilst seeking to redraw some of the boundaries of that debate. The essays contained here demonstrate that “nation” and “nationality” remain as significant terms in a world increasingly conceived as the Global Village envisioned by Marshall McLuhan, decades before the advent of mobile digital technology. We may have access, in the West, to a peripatetic second life wherein we wander a world-wide network of information, entertainment, news and social interaction but we are not so very different to those who inhabit the developing world. We are all placeable, all connected, however problematically, to a material location that inflects the identities available to us, no matter how we resist the cartographies of that location.

As illustrated in the following pages, “national” is deployed in the contemporary consideration of texts only in conjunction with the various morphemes, prefixes and suffixes which temper or re-inflect its valence. Thus, the “inter-,” “intra-,” “trans-,” “post-” national attains a terminological mobility which belies its apparently stagnant relationship to geography. Many of the scholars writing here are early career researchers,

bringing the freshness of their approach to bear on canonical and non-canonical texts, topics and authors. Their work highlights that there is no easy relationship between those traditional markers of the subject—place and identity—whilst illustrating that there are many other places and identities that should be brought into consideration. What emerges from the following pages is the clear acknowledgement that no single map exists that can encompass all the interactions of place, identity, and nationality that characterise the contemporary world. We should take solace in this fact, accept that mapping the self will always be a contingent process and celebrate the trans-national, Irish poet Eavan Boland's recognition "That the Science of Cartography is limited."

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Finally, we extend our deepest thanks for the insightful advice at various stages of the project and the foreword provided by the senior editor, Dr. Alex Goody (Oxford Brookes University).

With gratitude,
Nissa Parmar and Anna Hewitt

INTRODUCTION

NISSA PARMAR AND ANNA HEWITT

In the “Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition” of *The Location of Culture* (2004), Homi Bhabha identifies the American poet Adrienne Rich’s collection *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991) as “one of the most striking series of poems dealing with the contemporary cosmopolitan world.” Reading section 10 of the poem “Eastern War Time,” Bhabha asserts that “Rich takes a global measure – a measure that is both moral and poetic – by decentering the place from which she speaks, and the location in which she lives” (xviii). Bhabha’s reading is aligned with his theorisation of culture which rejects fixed identifications, such as nationality, and emphasises hybridity and liminality.

Bhabha believes the section offers “no consensual cartography.” However, the poem actually *maps*, by highlighting locations and the historic events associated with them, and *unmaps* by connecting these events through repetition, the elimination of punctuation, and embodiment. Most of the lines of the poem start with “I” or “I’m” and depict figures and objects in action in scenes set around the world. The first-person speaker signals the poem’s concern with identity. However, it is not Rich, but memory who acts as the poem’s speaker. Memory tells Rich and the reader:

I’m a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
a river in Mississippi I’m a woman standing
with other women dressed in black
on the streets of Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem. (44)

Significantly, the only commas of the poem separate the specific place names of the line above. These two commas draw attention to both a heightened sense of intra-national borders and the fracturing of a single notion of state identity within Israel’s society, as multiple voices, including women’s, are acknowledged and included. Line breaks or the insertion of extra spaces are used between the rest of memory’s embodiments in the poem, suggesting the separation between the corpses

in Berlin and Mississippi is physical not ideological. The corpses are, in turn, situated within the poem in open dialogue with “other women dressed in black on the streets of” Israel. By eliminating commas and full stops in favour of textual gaps, Rich emphasises commonalities in these situations, connecting or weaving them together, though they might occur in places we can distinguish by name and separate with punctuation. Rather than drawing lines and demarcating boundaries, Rich’s poetic maps and atlas of poems blur boundaries between time and place:

I promised to show you a map you say but this is a mural
then yes let it be these are small distinctions
where do we see it from is the question. (6)

They also challenge the geo-political construction of the nation state and assert the authority of the creative text in the construction of what Bhabha terms “nationness,” an alternative to the static histories and “hierarchical or binary structuring” of “cultural differences and identifications – gender, race or class –” (“DissemiNation” 292-3) that have been central to traditional constructions of nationalism and national identity.

Rich’s poetic “map[s]” provide an introduction to the themes and concepts of this collection, which are presented in its title: *Mapping the Self: Place, Identity, Nationality*. They also offer a connection to a foundational critical predecessor for the collection, *Nation and Narration* (1990), whose significance is underlined by the fact it is in its ninth reprinting. The work of its editor, Homi Bhabha, as well as its contributors, plays an important role in defining terms and concepts in this introduction and informs the critical approaches of several essays of the collection. Most significantly, *Nation and Narration* asserts and justifies the authority of the creative text in shaping nation and identity, an assertion which underpins this collection. Bhabha’s view of nations as narrations in constant development also points toward the necessity of *Mapping the Self*. The essays examine recent texts and cultural phenomena, such as the bicentenary of Australia, the formation of the European Union, the devolution of Wales, 9/11, and contemporary migration and diaspora. They revisit historic events including modernist transnationalism, the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and the Partition of India. In the process, the essays variously challenge, update, extrapolate, and reaffirm the literary and cultural theorisations of a previous and groundbreaking generation of academics including: Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Jahan Ramazani, Gloria Anzaldúa, Lisa Lowe, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, and their predecessors Edward Said, Raymond Williams, and Benedict Anderson.

Place, Identity, Nationality

The titled themes of the collection have complex, contested, and intertwined definitions. Nationality and the related terms nation and nationalism are defined in relation to place and identity. It is through territory and a sense of belonging that “we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life” (Bhabha, “Introduction” 3). However, like post-feminism and post-ethnicity, post-nationality is an ideology that has considerable currency in contemporary, especially Western, culture. Feminism, ethnicity, and nationality are linked to identity, as well as to each other, and the attachment of the post hyphenate to each suggests that “society” is in the process of moving beyond them. The essays of this collection further examine such claims. For example, Roxanne Ellen Bibizadeh’s essay, “Othering the *Muslimah*: ‘Islamiciz[ing] the process of writing back’ in Leila Aboulela’s *Minaret* and *The Translator*” asserts the necessity of Islamic-minded feminism and texts to contest the stereotypes that surround and homogenise Muslim women in the United Kingdom and abroad. Meanwhile, Emma Schofield’s “‘Poor old mixed up Wales’: Re-writing Regional and National Identity in Post-Devolution Wales” asserts the role of regional Anglophone Welsh fiction writers in developing a post-devolutionary national identity.

Christopher Davis presents an opposing view of regional and national identity asserting that “place is no longer solid ground on which to plant one’s national flag.” Analysing the work of British film director, Shane Meadows, Davis argues that Meadows’ work depicts a new form of multi-national, European identity, which seems aptly described by David Ian Hanauer’s term, “non-place identity.” This form of identity “posits a shift in locus from static physical existence in time and space as required by modernist concepts of national identity to a more individualised conceptualisation based on available semiotic resources as described by supermodern understandings of the world” (199). In Davis’ analysis, the identities of Meadows’ characters in *Somers Town* are informed by the ease and accessibility of transnational travel and communication and the increased fluidity of national borders between countries in the EU. The formation of the EU is a form of regionalisation and indicative, along with transnationalism, of the nation state’s waning influence. In *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture: Pants for an Octopus* (2007), Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s explains:

During the heyday of nation state formation, broadly from 1840 to 1960, nations and states underwent many changes. Particularly since the mid-twentieth century, nation states have been accompanied, and in some

respects gradually overtaken by, regional, transnational, and postnational trends. States will no doubt continue to be major strategic formations, but they are changing profoundly due to internationalization, the pooling of sovereignty, and regionalization. (196)

One might anticipate a decline in nationalism and the significance of national identity in conjunction with the decline of the nation state, and, as Timothy Brennan points out in “The National Longing for Form,” “we often hear that nationalism is dead” (45). However, analyses from a variety of academic disciplines suggest otherwise.

Bhabha notes that the political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1983) “paved the way” for *Nation and Narration* (“Introduction” 1). Anderson asserts that in conjunction with the development of the nation state the “cultural artefacts” “nationality,” “nation-ness,” and “nationalism” were also created. “[O]nce created they became modular, capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (4). In the Introduction to *European Identity and Culture: Narratives of Transnational Belonging* (2012), a collection of social science essays, Rebecca Friedman and Markus Thiel underline the importance of Anderson’s work in understanding and defining the transnational identities arising from the regionalisation of Europe (5). The collection as a whole suggests that, even in an increasingly globalised and regionalised world, nationality, “nation-ness,” and nationalism are not dead but constantly reborn and on the move.

This is perhaps most apparent in the many and diverse diasporic global communities and transnational identities produced not by regionalisation but by colonialism and neo-imperialism and their by-products, the post-colonial neo-imperial immigrations of the twentieth and twenty-first century. As a consequence, Western nation states in particular have grown increasingly culturally plural. They have also grown increasingly multicultural (Pieterse 3). However, Pieterse points out that the world has always been “multiethnic” and that this condition is frequently at odds with the homogenous national identities and borders of the nation state (3, 103, 197).

Pieterse also highlights that one consequence of the increasingly global world in which “mobility is a function of power” is that “dominant groups and individuals . . . can choose to identify ethnic or post-ethnic, to identify “white,” to shop for identity, to identify as liberal or humanist, or to step outside the framework altogether and identify as a world citizen” (117). For the privileged, mobility—social and geographic—affords a variety of

identity choices that may or may not be linked with place or with nationality. This is illustrated in Hannah Roche's essay on the expatriate Gertrude Stein, who in *Paris France* claims, "writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really" (2), a statement which locates her among a privileged class of transnational modernist writers for whom such a choice existed. That said, Stein's exercising of such choice of "mobility as a function of power" (Pieterse 117) contrasts with the constraints inherent to her identity as a woman.

This paradoxical sense of gender disempowerment against national, racial and class privilege is also present in the work of contemporary poet, Jo Shapcott, for whom nationality is a matter of irresolvable complexity. Anna Hewitt's essay, "'The complicated shame / of Englishness': Jo Shapcott's Transnational Poetics," reveals Shapcott as a writer who is conscious of, to borrow Ramazani's phrase, mapping "transnational engagements across uneven global terrain" (11). "[U]neven . . . terrain" and "uneven" power dynamics exist also within her own identity as a poet. She speaks from the woman's liminal perspective in relation to the canonical literary tradition—dislocated from the historical, patriarchal construction of national discourse—but at the same time from within the dominant ideology and discourse of Englishness. Shapcott's poetic speakers juxtapose their own safety against someone else's trauma: "I was born in a city / to come and go safely through the boroughs," whilst, elsewhere, "shocks pound the citizens . . . blast them out of their beds" ("St Bride's," *Of Mutability* [2010] 17). Stein and Shapcott's geographical and imaginative travelling—their adoption of multiple, shifting places and identities in their lives and writings—must be, at least partially, understood as inseparable from their first world, white, middle-class status: to rephrase Shapcott's poem quoted above, their being "born in a [situation of privilege] / to come and go safely through the [world]."

The freedom to construct identities that are not circumscribed by place or nationality is also available, to varying degrees, to several of the immigrant figures of the texts examined in this collection. In the essay "Unfenced Routes: Migrating the Self, Adopting New Identites," Meritxell Joan-Rodríguez argues that the title character of Leïla Sebbar's novel *Sherazade* and the memoirist Asha Miró both empower themselves to construct new identities and imagine new communities by reclaiming aspects of their cultural ancestry and asserting their presence in the contemporary cultures of France and Spain, the respective nation states to which they immigrated as children. However, this process of identity formation is both necessitated and tempered by their race and ethnicity as

well as their gender. Such designations, which are part of the binary and hierachal ordering of traditional Western nationalism, are not absolved by multiculturalism, “a work in progress” as Pieterse points out (3), and are, quite possibly, intensified through it.

In “Immigration, Nation State and Belonging” (2010), Hurriyet Babacan argues that the increased diversity and consequent multiculturalism of post-colonialism has led, not to hybridisation, but essentialism and a return to historically-rooted nationalism:

In contemporary post-colonial societies such as Europe, USA and Australia, both peoples who have been colonised and those who colonised have responded to the diversity of multiculturalism by a renewed search for ethnic certainties. Some previously marginalised ethnic groups have resisted their exclusion in their host societies by reasserting their identities of origin. On the other hand, among dominant groups in these societies there is also an ongoing search for old ethnic identities and the nostalgia for more culturally homogeneous states such as “Englishness” or “Irishness” in the UK, Ireland and Australia and for a return to “good old family values” or “our way of life” (Woodward 1997). The search for identity, meaning and certainty has created contestations that seek justification for the forging of new and future identities. Often these justifications take the form of bringing up past origins, traditions, mythologies and boundaries and creating new forms of patriotism that exclude anyone who does not conform to them. The boundaries are particularly contested at the level of national identity and the desperate production of a unique and homogeneous national identity that corresponds to the perceived territory or homeland. (15)

As racially-“marked” immigrants, Sherazade and Miró disrupt the homogeneity of traditional and dominant national constructions of France and Catalan, yet the figures’ own engagement with their cultural roots is far from essentialist or idealised as Rodríguez illustrates. However, the “search for ethnic certainties” to which Babacan refers emphasises that nationalism is not only a product of the nation state.

Brennan explains that “As a term, [nation] refers to both the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the ‘*natio*’ – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging” (45). He quotes Raymond Williams who emphasises the connection between nationalism and place:

‘Nation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native’. We are *born* into relationships which are typically settled in place. This form of primary and ‘placeable’ bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance.

Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial. (qtd. in Brennan 45)

While Williams underlines the highly-constructed nature of the nation state's nationalism, he emphasises the relationship of place to nationalism, a relationship that leads to subnational identifications in which a subnation refers to a "subdivision of a nation often distinguished by a community of culture and interests rather than by administrative dependency" (*Merriam-Webster*). The Basque nationalism that Miró encounters and her own nationalist impulse to construct an identity and sense of belonging that corresponds with the place she was born, India, are both examples of subnationalism.

"Belonging" is a word that recurs across the work of identity theorists, and nationalism, especially in its subnational form, is very much about generating a sense of belonging, be it through the "reasserti[on]" of "identities of origin" (Babacan 15) or the construction of emergent identities. The term emergent comes from Raymond Williams who explains that dominant cultures coexist with "residual" cultures, older forms of culture whose influence may be active or in decline, as well as "emergent" cultures which might challenge, alter, and potentially replace the dominant culture (40-2). In this process, individual texts, which serve to establish individual identities and promote specific emergent cultures—such as the Beur culture of French-born Algerians with which Sherazade identifies—become sites of transformation that contribute to the development of a larger emergent culture that challenges dominant cultural hegemonies, local, national, regional, and global. Lisa Lowe explains:

We might say that hegemony is not only the political process by which a particular group constitutes itself as "the one" or "the majority" in relation to which "minorities" are defined and know themselves to be "other," but is equally the process by which various and incommensurable positions of otherness may ally and constitute a new majority, a "counter-hegemony." (140)

According to self-identified "*mestiza*" cultural theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa, this process begins with place and self. Speaking of the complex of geographic and cultural forces informing her identity as a lesbian Mexican-American growing up on the Texas-Mexico border, she wrote, "Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society" (109). In accordance with Anzaldúa's ideology, by acknowledging place-based national and

subnational social constructions, the individual might begin to map and then remap the self, a process which leads to not only individual but social transformation.

Similarly, Adrienne Rich's poetry, which is typically written in first person and merges the intensely personal with the overtly political, indicates that mapping the self is part of the creation of *An Atlas of the Difficult World*. Her own experience of exclusion from her nation state on the basis of her identity as a woman, lesbian, and Jew led her to participate in what Bhabha characterises as a boundary-defying construction of a global and "complex process of 'minoritarian' modernity" (*The Location* xx). However, Rich's work does not elide or attempt to circumvent nationalism in the process; rather, she engages it directly. "The insistent repetition of the phrase – 'I'm a / I'm a . . .'" might sound to Bhabha like "some bleak counting-son of a monstrous child of our times" (xix). However, the first-person anaphora and embodiment also clearly allude to Whitman, America's self-proclaimed national poet, and, as Nissa Parmar argues in "The Spider, Her Web, and Walt Whitman: Adrienne Rich's Re-Visionary Weaving," Rich's career-long engagement with Whitman reflects the national orientation of her own poetic. In describing the world of her "atlas" as "difficult," Rich acknowledges both the cultural complexity of the contemporary and global world as well as the dominant and residual nationalism of nation states and the firmly entrenched binaries and hierarchies which facilitated their construction.

Mapping the Self

This complexity is evident in "An Atlas of the Difficult World" where Rich acknowledges the contemporary world as a "map"—a world defined by geographic and geopolitical borders—as well as a "mural"—a global society characterised by transnationalism, hybridities, interstices, and counter-hegemonies—depending upon "where do we see it from" (11). Thus, this collection incorporates perspectives from around the globe and a variety of critical approaches and creative textual forms in its exploration of the complex relationships between identity, nationality, and place in the modern and contemporary world.

The first part, "Women Writers and Nationalism," opens with Hannah Roche's essay on Stein, "The Making of an American (in France): Gertrude Stein and the (Ex-)Patriot Paradox," which analyses the ways in which the expatriate writer deliberately dislocates herself from both her native land and her foreign "home," Paris. Roche posits that, whilst others may argue that expatriation serves to dilute or to compromise any claim to

nationalism, Stein maintains the notion that distance facilitates an engagement with, and embodiment of, her natural American identity. Thus, Stein simultaneously establishes and erases the link between place and personhood: America has produced her, but she can continue to exist as American, and to create American literature, without the support or physical presence of her country.

Roche explores the complexities of assigning a fixed national identity to Stein, linking expatriation to her creative process through a detailed consideration of the writer's definition of romance as "the outside thing . . . that is always a thing to be felt inside" ("An American" 62-4). The essay examines the tensions between Stein's investment in the idea of a shared American national identity and her concurrent acknowledgment of diversity, subnational divisions, and disparities. The "(ex-)patriot paradox" of the essay's title is shown to refer to the problem of "hav[ing] two countries," Stein's confusingly complex inside/outside dichotomy, and the perceived coexistence of both essential and "many kinds" of Americans (*The Making* 180).

Roche does not emphasise the role of gender, sexuality, or religion in Stein's quest for American identity. However, these elements are critical to Adrienne Rich's "location" as a poet and the development of her nationalist feminism, argues Nissa Parmar in "The Spider, Her Web, and Walt Whitman: Adrienne Rich's Re-Visionary Weaving." The essay examines Rich's career-long and shifting engagement with America's national bard, Whitman, which facilitated the development of Rich's nationally-oriented feminism and its evolution into a globally-conscious emergent nationalism. Parmar follows this evolution through Rich's use of the motifs of the spider and weaving, which began as a doubled allusion to Classical Western mythology and Whitman and developed into a metaphor for Rich's re-visionary poetic. With the expansion of her poetic web, Rich used weaving as a motif to connect her art and politics to other emergent national and global cultures. Thus, Parmar's essay highlights the significance and difficulty of her negotiation of her role as a national poet and member of "'minoritarian' modernity" (*The Location* xx) striving to "bind, join, reweave, cohere, replenish" (*An Atlas* 10) emergent cultures in the United States and around the world.

Parallels between Rich and Shapcott's poetics of nationhood are marked, particularly in relation to Parmar's argument that Rich viewed emergent nationalism as an essential component of her feminism and vice versa. Anna Hewitt's essay on Shapcott, "'The complicated shame / of Englishness': Jo Shapcott's Transnational Poetics," illustrates that the poet's transnational poetic dialogue is always backlit with an awareness of

how gender issues are inextricable from the complex relationship between writing and nationhood. The poem “A Letter to Dennis” connects “the complicated shame / of Englishness” to the woman poet’s “complicated” relationship to her literary forefathers (*Her Book* [2000] 125). Hewitt traces Shapcott’s “shame” about England’s political past and present through readings of poems which span her career to date. Arthur Aughey’s idea is highlighted—that “we should think of an engagement with Englishness ‘as participation in a conversation’, rather than as delineating a fixed or stable entity” (qtd. in Kumar 472). Aughey’s perspective is relevant for Shapcott’s approach to the poetic vocation, in which her poems are situated in conversation with other places, poets, and artists. Thus, “participation in a conversation,” Hewitt argues, perhaps offers a way for the poet, nation, and world to engage in a discourse of translocal diversity, connectedness, and responsibility.

Like Parmar and Hewitt, Roxanne Ellen Bibizadeh examines the complexities of national identity and gender in conjunction with male literary influences and predecessors in the essay, “Othering the *Muslimah*: ‘Islamiciz[ing] the process of writing back’ in Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator* and *Minaret*.” Bibizadeh argues that British Muslim women are “victims” of both Western patriarchy and nationalistic and patriarchal interpretations of Islam, and therefore subject to “double marginalization.” She asserts that, writing counter to secular Western feminism, the Egyptian-born British author Aboulela exposes and defies these patriarchies through the two novels which feature female protagonists who establish their identity and secure a sense of place through individualistic and feminist interpretations of their faith. While, as Bibizadeh observes, both protagonists are empowered by their faith, which is informed by and informs their transnational migrations, the characters are two very different though equally complex *Muslimah*, or Muslim women. The complexity and difference between these characters, as well as the diverse perspectives and interpretations of Islam presented through the other characters of the two novels, illustrate the diversity within British and international Islamic communities. Therefore, Bibizadeh argues that *The Translator* (1999) and *Minaret* (2005) frustrate the boundaries of traditional and limiting forms of nationalism by countering homogenising Western racial, gender, and religious stereotyping.

The second part of the collection, “National Identity and Contemporary Fictions,” emphasises the role of literature in establishing and rewriting the identity of the nation state and national narrative. In “‘Poor old mixed up Wales’: Re-writing Regional and National Identity in Post-Devolution Wales,” Emma Schofield analyses implications for Welsh national identity

following the 1997 closely contested referendum which initiated devolution in Wales. Outlining that regional fiction has seen an unprecedented growth in this period, Schofield asserts that fiction from South Wales has played a particularly prevalent role in forming a conscious sense of nationhood. Works by Rachel Trezise, Charlotte Williams, Richard John Evans and Catrin Dafydd are all discussed in the essay, which argues that in the post-devolution era Anglophone Welsh fiction with a regional focus plays an instrumental part in the formation of contemporary Welsh national identity. However, at the same time, Schofield illuminates through her readings of these works the polyvalence, contradictions, and subdivisions within this identity.

In “Contesting the Land: Contemporary Australian Fiction and the (De)Construction of the Narrative of Belonging,” Martin Staniforth takes an ecocritical and postcolonial approach to Australian nationalism and identity. The first part of Staniforth’s essay examines the post-colonial ideologies that have informed Australian history, policy, and governance, in particular, the settler desire to create a “new England” in Australia. These ideologies led to marginalisation of the Aboriginal population and destruction of native habitats and species and continue to define Australian identity. He argues that the settler narrative and a lack of historic accountability are perpetuated in contemporary Australian fiction. However, Rodney Hall’s *The Second Bridegroom* (1991) and Kim Scott’s *That Deadman Dance* (2010) offer alternative narratives which hold settlers accountable to their past. These novels present the settler narrative as “degrad[ing] both the land and the nation.” They exhibit an attentiveness to Australia’s ecology and history, which Lawrence Buell describes as “place-attachment” (72) that is typical of Aboriginal culture and vastly different from dominant national narrative and history, beginning with settler arrival. Such “counter-narratives” are essential because, Staniforth suggests, they contribute to the recognition of Australia as a multicultural nation and might engender reflective cultural, political, and legal changes.

The three essays of the final and third part, “Transnational Identities,” consider new forms of identity born of transnational migrations and various forms of global remapping. In “Wearing Identities: *Somers Town’s* New Paradigm of Belonging,” Christopher Davis presents Shane Meadows’ *Somers Town* (2007) as a film which collapses transcultural and transnational borders, depicting London as a territory with an unfixed identity and indistinct edge. The city’s Europeanism is symbolised by the Eurostar and recurrent motifs of transit in the film, which Davis argues gesture toward the city’s enhanced porousness and the emergence of

hybrid, twenty-first century, post-national identities. Davis closely examines the development of inter-European relationships in the film, demonstrating that these new relationships are central to the formation of new identities, new (trans)nationalisms, and new narratives of belonging. The formation of the identities of the characters in *Somers Town* are shown to be in process, constructed through cross-cultural bonds, and rooted in both an estrangement from elsewhere and a shared sense of place, even if both are temporary connections through location.

The validity of national borders and place-based identities is also queried in Sandrine Soukai's "Shadows and Fugitive Selves in Amitav Ghosh and Kamila Shamsie's Partition Novels." Soukai illustrates that Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and Shamie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) manifest Pakistani historian Vazira Zamindar's claim that Indian Partition and its aftermath, or "shadow" can only be understood by placing the history of Partition alongside other traumatic historic events of the twentieth century "marked by all the violence of making modern, 'ethnically cleansed' national identities" (12). In Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*, the characters' migrations link the historic tragedies of Nazi Germany, the Nagasaki bombing, Partition, and 9/11. The reflections and family history of the protagonist of Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* connect the London bombings of WWII to Partition and the 1964 Communal Riots in India and Pakistan. Soukai asserts that the shadows described by Zamindar can also be understood as a literary trope in the novels, which are both rife with shadow imagery and the shadowy territory of overlapped memories and histories. It is in the liminal space created by the shadows of the novels and the characters' migrations that distinct national traumas, separated by both time and place, overlap and can begin to be understood and re-understood through memory-work. Thus, Soukai asserts, the novels and literary fiction more broadly "open up the new spaces needed to redefine" conceptions of place, identity, and nationality.

Cultural overlap and hybridisation are also emphasised in Meritxell Joan-Rodríguez's "Unfenced Routes: Migrating the Self, Adopting New Identities in the Works of Najat El Hachmi, Leïla Sebbar, and Asha Miró." In the essay, Joan-Rodríguez examines transnational displacements between India and Spain, Morocco and Spain, and Algeria and France through two novels and a memoir featuring young women protagonists. Her analysis remaps the contemporary world by cross-applying Gloria Anzaldúa's theorisation of the Borderlands condition facilitated by the border between the United States and Mexico and marked by the Rio Grande. Drawing on the premise that the Mediterranean Sea functions as a similar border dividing cultures and disparate economies, Joan-Rodríguez

argues that the texts and their the real and imagined protagonists dwell in “Borderlands” which allow them to cross cultural boundaries, reconfigure their own cultural identities, and, in turn, inform and reform the societies to which they belong. Though Joan-Rodríguez acknowledges the wilfully unchanging nature of nation states, her protagonists illustrate that “place and nationality cannot bind identity.” She suggests that the protagonists represent contemporary reality where “people, languages, customs, ideas cohabit in a present that is undeniably nomadic, transnational, and trans-cultural” and hybridisation and liminality are norms.

The texts which this collection of essays tours, separately and collectively, inscribe an unsettled sense of selfhood in an open-ended dialogue with unfixed concepts of place. They all centralise the problematic nature of identity, and illustrate that stories of national belonging, homes, and hinterlands are in constant process and need of renewal. The topics of the specific essays which follow, and the borders and interstices between them, construct a global web of the contingent, locational subject. While the essays address various eras, events, cultures, and nations, all provide a contemporary critical examination of the relationships between place, nationality, and identity through the creative text, which occupies a nuanced space, “away from statistics and ever-dubious pretences of objectivity,” as Joan-Rodríguez points out. The collection illustrates that it is to the creative text that we must look for penetrating insight into the complex contemporary realities of place, nationality, and identity.

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PART I:

WOMEN WRITERS AND NATIONALISM

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN (IN FRANCE): GERTRUDE STEIN AND THE (EX-)PATRIOT PARADOX

HANNAH ROCHE

“America is my country and Paris is my home town” (“An American and France” 61).

“I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it” (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* 7).

An American in France

Whilst the bulk of Gertrude Stein’s notoriously dense oeuvre has, somewhat inevitably, remained the preserve of academics and aficionados, the writer’s proclivity to perplex continues to attract popular attention. Reviewing two reissued Stein texts for *The New York Times* in January 2012, self-confessed “inexpert” Lynne Tillman fondly tags Stein a “trickster” whose multifaceted work, and “rambunctious” voice, invites both reverence and ridicule. For Ian MacMillan, the presenter of a 2013 BBC Radio Four programme entitled “Was Gertrude Stein Any Good?”, the joy of Stein is to be found in the incomprehensible: “Gertrude Stein excites me so much because I don’t know what she’s on about half of the time.” Of course, MacMillan’s ability to reel off Stein’s “best lines”—and admission of failure to conquer the writer’s “impenetrable” epic, *The Making of Americans* (1925)—suggests that Stein’s public appeal, and reputation for absurdity, owes more to her aphorisms and tenets than it does to her “masterpieces.” As Stein writes in the atypically accessible *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933):

[T]he newspapers are always interested. They always say . . . that my writing is appalling but they always quote it and what is more, they quote it correctly. (78)

Essentially, with the exception of the relatively sensible “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” (100) from the 1913 poem “Sacred Emily,” the most celebrated of Stein’s dictums are characterised by their apparent embodiment of a paradox or illogicality. Together with those cited above, the teasingly gnomic “there is no there there” (298) that journalists, critics, and biographers delight in extracting from 1937’s *Everybody’s Autobiography* (note the oxymoronic title) is as confounding as it is concise.

It is no coincidence that Stein’s most challenging, and arguably most charming, assertions relate to placing and location. The final part of Stein’s first novel, *Q.E.D.*, a semi-autobiographical text completed shortly after expatriation to Paris in 1903, opens with the following lines:

There is no passion more dominant and instinctive in the human spirit than the need of the country to which one belongs. . . . It is simply a need for the particular air that is native, whether it is the used up atmosphere of London, the clean-cut cold of America or the rarefied air of the Swiss mountains. The time comes when nothing in the world is so important as a breath of one’s own particular climate. If it were one’s last penny it would be used for that return passage. (99)

Although the outlandish syntax and laboriously repetitive sentences that typify much of her later work do not feature here, the implications of Stein’s argument are troubling nonetheless. As the writer would go on to make “that return passage” only twice in her lifetime (once for a brief visit in 1904 and again for a lecture tour of the United States in 1934-5), her advocacy of the benefits of “the particular air that is native” is ultimately exposed as hollow or, at worst, hypocritical. Moreover, Stein’s decision to remain in France and to openly adopt Paris as her “home town” (“An American” 62) directly calls into question the identity, and, indeed, the significance, of “the country to which one belongs.”

Jahan Ramazani, for one, considers the “home town” designation to “fracture [Stein’s] apparently nationalist claim” (23) that America is “my country.” In his work on *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), Ramazani argues that the tradition of classifying writers under a “single-nation banner”—in other words, the creation and maintenance of “artificial boundaries” that divide literature according to writers’ (mono)nationality—does not accommodate those who, like Stein, hold a “translocal claim of identity” (23). For Ramazani, Stein’s absorption into “nationalist narratives of ‘American’ literature” is problematic in that such a categorisation cannot account for the writer’s affiliation to France, which is as powerful as the “spectral context” of her American roots (23).

Undoubtedly, Ramazani's call for a "re-mapping of the field" (xi) in terms of expatriate literature's dual- or trans-nationality is strikingly relevant in this context: Stein's connection to Paris, "the city that suited those of us that were to create the twentieth century art and literature, naturally enough" (*Paris France* 24), is, without question, erased by the "American" label.

Stein, however, would most certainly disagree with the claim that her work may be defined as "transnational." Although Paris remained her "home town" from 1903 until her death in 1946, Stein revisited the *theme* of her American identity, and of "Americanness" more generally, at various junctures throughout her writing career. Moreover, the "dominant and instinctive" passion for America that Stein expressed in *Q.E.D.* was by no means diluted or compromised by life in France. On the contrary, Stein upheld the notion that, as an American who would be "free not to be connected with anything happening" ("An American" 68), Paris alone could provide the required space in which to embrace her nationalism and, more specifically, to become an American *writer*. Thus, whilst Ramazani is entirely justified in his proposal of a new (trans)nationalist paradigm by which to approach modern and contemporary literature, Stein's markedly essentialist take on nationality effectively promotes cultural and artistic division rather than cross-national exchange: "the french [sic] and the American do not have the sense of going on together" ("An American" 64). In this sense, Ramazani's inclusion of Stein in a work on "intercultural energies and mobilities of cross-national literary citizenship" (24) is counterproductive: the "completely and entirely american [sic]" (*The Autobiography* 20) Stein threatens to undo the text's central argument.

Stein's insistence upon a "very traditional" (*Paris France* 12) city as the birthplace of her definitively modernist literature provides a further example of a distinctively Steinian conundrum. It becomes apparent, however, that a certain consistency, and, more importantly, an undeniable sense, underpins Stein's peculiar logic. Furthermore, although Stein's unshakable patriotism may pose a sizable obstruction to Ramazani's proposed dismantling of the enduring mononationalist model, her contribution to a discussion on modern nationalisms, and her role in the formation of "new" national boundaries, is nevertheless vital. As this essay goes on to examine, the means by which Stein cultivates her American identity at a distance from her homeland, repeatedly reiterating the value of dislocation from her "own civilization" ("An American" 63), represents a national shift that serves to both underline and undermine the value of "place." Simply put, Stein's particular breed of "Americanness"

may be staunchly nationalistic, and immovable in terms of fervour, but the reality of Stein's physical (dis)placement essentially loosens the attachment between her nationality and "her" nation.

Interestingly, when read together, the two famously contradictory statements that open this essay provide a useful insight into the curious dynamic of Stein's expatriate nationalism. Although the second quotation (taken from *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein's own autobiography that she playfully wrote from her partner's perspective) apparently offers Toklas' outlook, the claim that "I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it" neatly summarises the way in which Stein strives to resolve, or to excuse, the matter of her expatriate identity. In her emphasis upon Paris as separate from, and different to, herself—as "a complete other . . . that stays there where it is" ("An American" 63)—Stein symbolically "turn[s] her back" to her French "home town." At the same time, Stein's abandonment of America is, to some degree, defended by the notion that "turn[ing] her back" on her homeland does not indicate that she "like[s]" it any less.

"A thing to be felt inside"

In the "Advertisement" for 1928's *Useful Knowledge*, Stein writes:

Romance is everything and the very best material should make the cheapest thing is making into living the romance of human being.

This is the American something that makes romance everything. And romance is Useful Knowledge.

Whilst the meaning of "romance" here may be somewhat ambiguous—Stein is apparently expressing her admiration for American manufacturing principles—its importance in relation to Stein's America is, at least, made plain. If, as Stein claims, "the American something . . . makes romance everything," then the question of "romance" *must* be addressed in order to gain any understanding of Stein's unique "view" of her nationality. Helpfully, Stein goes some way in explaining her interpretation of the term in two of her later meditations on expatriation—the 1936 lecture, "An American and France," and 1940's *Paris France*:

What is adventure and what is romance. Adventure is making the distant approach nearer but romance is having what is where it is which is not where you are stay where it is. So those who create things do not need adventure but they do need romance they need that something that is not for them stays where it is and that they can know that it is there where it is.

... Romance is the outside thing, that remains the outside thing and remaining there has its own existing and so although it is outside it is inside because it being outside and staying outside it is always a thing to be felt inside. ("An American" 62-4)

After all everybody, that is, everybody who writes is interested in living inside themselves in order to tell what is inside themselves. That is why writers have to have two countries, the one where they belong and the one in which they live really. The second one is romantic, it is separate from themselves, it is not real but it is really there (*Paris France* 2).

As the above extracts clearly introduce a further series of complexities and problems, it is appropriate to paraphrase Stein's argument into a number of concise points. Notably, the reason for Stein's rejection of "adventure"—its "making the distant approach nearer"—marks distance or detachment as a prerequisite to the creative process. According to Stein's model of "romantic" creation, expatriation is vital as it is imperative that the artist or writer is culturally disconnected from the civilisation in which they live. The act of writing, for Stein, is entirely dependent upon such physical displacement or "not belonging": the freedom "inside" that facilitates creation can only be achieved if the outside remains outside as *other*—or, in other words, if the foreigner's status as outsider is upheld.

Although Stein offers a detailed description of the way in which France is "romantic" to an American, her definition of romance as "something that exists of itself and by itself" ("An American" 64) could potentially be applied to the neglected America. France is "the outside thing" to Stein, the foreigner, but America is "the outside thing" to Stein, the expatriate. Both countries must remain detached—the adopted country as culturally and linguistically separate, and the homeland at a physical distance—in order to be "felt inside," and therefore for "creation" ("An American" 63) to occur:

you are apt to mix yourself up too much with your civilization but . . . you in [the other country] have freedom inside yourself which if you are to do what is inside yourself and nothing else is a very useful thing to have happen to you. ("An American" 63)

The difference, however, lies in the fact that Stein considers America to have formed "what is inside [her]self." Stein maintains that, as she was born in America, the country naturally "made" her: "After all, anybody is as their land and air is . . . [a]nd so I am an American" ("An American" 62). Consequently, not only is it the case that America can never be truly isolated as "the outside thing," but also, the writing that "is inside [Stein's]