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ta' Malta

Cover:

A-Design Lab studio | www.a-designlab.com | Tel: +356 27761005

Mob: [+356 99790736](tel:+35699790736) | Email: info@a-designlab.com

A-Design Lab is a design studio, formed by a designer and a developer, based in Malta, who craft websites, brands and a variety of collaterals, inspired by their passion for imagination. This young duo favours a playful approach toward work to give every project a distinctive personality. They believe in the use of design to narrate a world made of differences, even within the most homogeneous markets.

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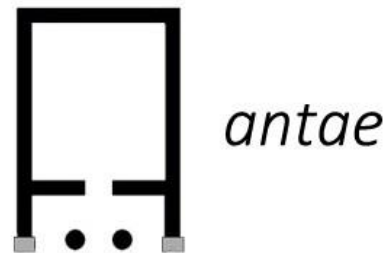
Editorial

Kayleigh Sacco, Geraldine Sammut, Maria Theuma

antae, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Feb., 2018), 1-5

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antae (ISSN 2523-2126) is an international refereed postgraduate journal aimed at exploring current issues and debates within English Studies, with a particular interest in literature, criticism and their various contemporary interfaces. Set up in 2013 by postgraduate students in the Department of English at the University of Malta, it welcomes submissions situated across the interdisciplinary spaces provided by diverse forms and expressions within narrative, poetry, theatre, literary theory, cultural criticism, media studies, digital cultures, philosophy and language studies. Creative writing and book reviews are also encouraged submissions.

Editorial

Keyleigh Sacco, Geraldine Sammut, Maria Theuma

University of Malta

Our time is one where terms such as “territories”, “immigration”, and “sovereignty” are being discussed with a new sense of urgency. Recent global events such as Brexit and Trump’s election have (understatedly) coloured the state of international politics. As a reference, in recent news the President of the United States of America thought it suitable to refer to African nations—and, in addition, countries such as Haiti and El Salvador—as ‘shitholes’, suggesting that immigrants would be more favourably accepted if they originated from countries like Norway.¹ In such a distressful setting, it is inevitable that one ruminates the notions of place and space while also questioning the role of art and literature in such an epoch, this in order to fruitfully engage with our time and counter such waves of populist thought.

As Edward Said comments, ‘our age—with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers—is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration’.² In addition, the displacement of peoples is predicted to be further exacerbated in as little as 20 years’ time. As reported by *The Guardian*, climate change will ‘[create] the biggest refugee crisis the world has ever seen’.³ Thus, with rising strains of nationalism and misplaced patriotism taking hold of the global landscape, as well as the surging of mass displacement, one cannot escape the pressing concerns of the now.

It is fitting then that ‘Placing, Spacing, Displacing’ followed a ten-day intensive study programme titled ‘Mediterranean Imaginaries: Literature, Arts, Culture’, which was the result of a collaboration which brought together the University of Malta and another six universities.⁴ Indeed, this year’s symposium not only facilitated a timely discussion on space, time and displacement, but also functioned as a network where cultural encounters and conflicts could be negotiated. Indeed, what was conveyed and reiterated both through the research presented and the social nature of the event is that the acts of placing and spacing are never static and cannot engender resolution, but are, rather, fluid and dynamic.

The symposium also welcomed another type of “placing” and “displacing”, this in the form of imagery. Laure Keyrouz (*University of Nova Gorica*), the artist of the image below (*Figure 1*),

¹ To date, this remark remains, technically, only alleged. See CNN Staff, ‘Did Trump say African countries were ‘shitholes’? Here’s a breakdown of conflicting memories of people in the meeting’, *CNN Politics*, (January 2018). <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/13/politics/trump-remark-reaction/index.html>>. [Accessed 2 February 2018].

² Edward Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’, in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Publications, 2000), p. 222.

³ Matthew Taylor, ‘Climate change “will create world’s biggest refugee crisis”’, *The Guardian*, (November 2017). <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/02/climate-change-will-create-worlds-biggest-refugee-crisis>>. [Accessed 2 January 2018].

⁴ For more details, see ‘Mediterranean Imaginaries: Literature, Arts, Culture’, *Newspoint*, (September 2016). <<https://www.um.edu.mt/newspoint/news/features/2016/09/mediterraneanimaginariesliteratureartsculture>>. [Accessed 2 January 2018].

visualises her own poetic lines: *I am the blood that / penetrated the blue, / in the sea...*⁵ In the dominating black that overwhelms both blue and red, Keyrouz seems to be depicting those immigrants who die at sea when attempting to flee their countries across the Mediterranean. It is not an unimportant fact that Malta (and thereby the symposium itself from which these selected proceedings are published) is located at the centre of this very sea.



Figure 1

These relationships and tensions are reflected nowhere better than in language, which is constantly exploring and transgressing boundaries. Language's creative powers have long been discussed, but it can be emphatically stated that it does not merely provide human beings with the means to describe the world around them but is also a performative force.⁶ Borders and boundaries, negotiation and transgression—language generates new spaces and rearranges existing ones, a revolutionary function which is in turn exploited by literature. This thread will run through the papers presented in this issue, where notions of the in-between, re-writing, and reclaiming space are foregrounded.

Indeed, in her paper, Bailey Betik (*University of Edinburgh*) explores concepts of the in-between in diasporic spaces, specifically in Imtiaz Dharker's poetry collections entitled *I Speak for the Devil* (2001) and *The Terrorist at My Table* (2006). Betik evokes notions of the diasporic macrospace, using critics such as Avtar Brah, in order to emphasise the fundamental underlining of the 'diasporic microspace' in constructing the wider, macro context. By closely analysing various works of poetry from Dharker's collections, Betik reflects how poetry becomes the vessel of the "I" in the diaspora microspace; tracing the socio-political shifts in understanding "Otherness" in a post-9/11 Western world.

⁵ Laure Keyrouz, 'طريق الشرق' or 'Triq l-Orient', Serial visual poetry #21, measuring 21x29 cm. Exhibited at Foundation CDG, expo 'Au-delà des frontières', Rabat, 2017. Translation provided by Keyrouz.

⁶ See J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

In his paper, Alan Goodson (*University of Edinburgh*) delves into literary representations of another persecuted race, one whose identity has always carried negative connotations: the Roma people, also commonly known as “gypsies”. Goodson provides an analysis of the Roma’s image in nineteenth century fiction in a survey-like fashion, before focusing on their representation in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories. As Goodson explains, Conan Doyle is well known for his imperialist loyalty; Goodson argues, however, that a close reading of his stories, and a further glance at some of the liberal statements he made in his letters, reveal a contrasting view; given that his portrayal of the Roma does not hold with imperialist ideals.

From fiction that attempts to identify the Other, we displace to autofictions. Ricarda Menn (*Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main*) takes the autobiographical fictions of John Burnside as her subject in order to delve into the realms of personal remembering, and recollective narratives on a wider scale. By closely reading Burnside’s *A Lie About My Father* (2006), *Waking Up in Toytown* (2009), and *I Put A Spell on You* (2014), Menn argues that autofictions are spaces wherein the renegotiation and restructuring of memory can occur: autofictions can, subsequently, space and displace both self and memory.

In his paper, Joseph St John (*University of Malta*) identifies the physical and spiritual places in ‘Exodus’, an Old English poem which essentially retells the Biblical narrative of the Israelites’ flight from Egypt. St John dwells on how the poem is built on the theme of ‘*wraec*’, or exile, which he asserts is meant to be understood as having a spiritual, rather than solely a strictly literal, significance. The Exodus-poet’s narrative technique are further explored as sharing characteristics with that that poetry of the age typically employed in its treatment of traditional or secular matters. St John asserts that, being the only extant Old English Old Testament poem to employ this specific technique, *Exodus* can be viewed as being unique in its genre.

Farah Aridi (*Goldsmiths, University of London*) offers a reading of Elias Khoury’s *Awlad al Ghetto: Ismi Adam (The Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam)* (2016), in which an analysis of the role of writing, and its significance in the investigation of notions of form and content, is undertaken. Aridi centres her discussion around the idea of writing as being an act of resistance itself, which can be further perceived as being a socio-spatial performance. By referencing Michel Foucault’s definition of heterotopia, that is, as a space of juxtaposed differences and a space of otherness, the spaces explored in Aridi’s paper are also presented as containing the potentiality for difference and change to occur.

Amira Aloui (*Carthage University*) argues that, textually speaking, *As You Like It* is essentially a sociopolitical map, in which the characters are regressively displaced from the court to the forest, signalling a move from policed and organised space to the free and the non-hierarchical, and bringing about a (re)mapping of poetic, political, and theatrical orders. Aloui claims that the play proposes a mobility in space which serves as a negation of authority, order, and hierarchy, and which results in a displacement that ultimately offers space for dissenting bodies to interrogate, to disturb, and to dislocate.

Aran Ward Sell (*University of Edinburgh*) examines Jeff VanderMeer’s Southern Reach trilogy (2014) in light of the generic potentials of “Weird fiction”, and its decentred and decentralising

perspective on the ways in which humans interact with their lived environment. Ward Sell identifies the idea of biology as an unstable spatial environment as a sustained metaphor that is employed by VanderMeer in order to address human-caused climate change in the Anthropocene. Ward Sell argues that the key concept in such a metaphor is ‘terroir’, and proposes it as being the ‘text’s shorthand for an irreducible symbiosis between biology and geography to which humanity has become fundamentally hostile’.

Ultimately, Aaron Aquilina (*Lancaster University*) analyses and responds to *antaë*’s previous issue—one dedicated to Malta and the arts—in an attempt to probe further into the relation between Malta and its artistic potentials, especially pertinent now that Valletta, Malta’s capital, has been declared the 2018 European Capital of Culture. He undertakes an exploration of the island in artistic, socio-economic, and political terms in order to illuminate the current state of Maltese culture.

An advert for the 2018 World Government Summit recently featured in *TIME* posits the following question: ‘In a world without borders, which culture will prevail?’⁷ Rather than focusing on linearity and hierarchies, this special issue testifies to the power that art (and hence, also literature) has to not only reimagine but moreover reconstitute time and space. Art is not merely descriptive or representative, but, Jacques Rancière state, can be considered political due to ‘the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames this time and peoples this space’.⁸ Without diminishing the pain and loss suffered by refugees and the exiled, rethinking the idea of displacement through art and literature can enhance our vision of place and space, as Said suggests. Rather than belonging *to* a specific time *in* a specific place, being able to negotiate one’s space *among* different peoples is, and will be, our now.

⁷ *TIME*, 191 (4), 5 February 2018, p. 3. See <<http://time.com/magazine/us/5118021/february-5th-2018-vol-191-no-4-u-s/>>. [Accessed 7 February 2018].

⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 23.

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