

## EDITORIAL

# *(Un-)Boundedness: On Mobility and Belonging*

In a “liquid modernity”, to use Zygmunt Bauman’s terminology, everything is more fluid and flexible, “neither fix[ing] space nor bind[ing] time” (Bauman, 2000: 2). Whereas in the past one could find deeply rooted social organizations and solid cultural configurations, in the modern era people and institutions have become increasingly de-territorialized. The fact that no one nor anything remains the same or in the same place for too long has had an enormous impact on how identities and communities are shaped, perceived and performed. They are no longer marked by permanence and stability but by mobility, change and imagination.

Time and space compression (Harvey, 1989), which has marked late modernity as a result of new technologies, new means of transportation and new communication tools, has played an important role in the devaluation of spatial delimitation, by nurturing a faster and continuous circulation of goods, ideas, information and people on a large scale. Traditional notions of home, homeland and nation have been destabilized by new cultural flows that challenge the symbolic boundaries of both domestic space and nation-state. In Manuel Castells’ terms, the “space of flows” has come to replace the old “space of places” (Castells, 2004), where “new strategies of flexible accumulation have promoted a flexible attitude toward citizenship” (Ong, 1999), “floating identities” (Abbas, 1997) and “diasporic public spheres” (Shih, 2007). The emergence of this new “mobility paradigm” (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007)

has certainly involved the creation of multiple experiences, the production of new layers of personal and social relations and the formation of new geographies. As claimed by Elliot and Urry, “changes in how people live their life today are both affected by and reflect the broader changes of global mobility processes” (2010: ix), with connectivity being exponentially dependent on “miniaturized mobilities” (ibid.) and lifestyles becoming increasingly nomadic. All these aspects are summoned up in the main argument proposed by the authors that people’s lives have become, indeed, mobile lives (ibid.).

Mobility is often depicted as the opposite of belonging. Yet, these constantly shifting spaces and relationships, these global cultural flows or interactions Arjun Appadurai calls –scapes (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes) (Appadurai, 1996), whilst pointing to a growing sense of heterogeneity and transiency, also promote cultural exchange and new scales of belonging. Indeed, people appear to be always in transit, especially through “non-places”, “space[s] which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity” (Augé, 1995: 77-78) and yet, at the same time, foster a situational and transitory feeling of belonging. From this mobility stems, in fact, a constant struggle between belonging and longing, that is, finding a certain place to be a part of versus a sense of nostalgia, i.e. the desire to return to a place one is emotionally connected with.

This increasing globalized circulation, however, does not necessarily imply the standardization of the social fabric. Indeed, this mobility is taking place unevenly, at different paces and intensities, bringing visibility to globalization as a complex and multiform process, as the motor of both similarity and difference, dialogue and conflict, proximity and distance, boundedness and unboundedness. Despite being theoretically rendered as a worldwide phenomenon, globalization does not automatically translate to global influence. Instead, its asymmetrical expansion – how it affects people and locations differently – only reinforces its imaginary character.

This notion of globalization draws attention to the disparities that lie beneath this transnational phenomenon, namely at a micro scale, where a constant dual process of confrontation and communication takes place. On the one hand, within a globalized world, access to other cultures becomes easier and migratory movements more frequent, thus contributing to a regular contact with what is deemed different and unfamiliar. However, on the other hand, it is often the case that mobility, “frequent

repotting” (Putnam, 2000: 204), displacement and uprootedness lead to disparity, exclusion, and the creation of hybridized (Bhabha, 1994; Canclini 1995) or liminal (Turner, 1967; 1969) forms of life.

The tense relationship between two or more different cultures contributes to the development of hybrid or borderland identities (Anzaldúa, 1999) built upon both negotiation and transgression yet allowing the invention of new subjectivities, cartographies and categories of difference and belonging. The frontier, no longer understood merely as a geographical notion, a physical line between countries and regions, but broadly as what separates the ‘I’ from the ‘Other’, may thus be presented in a threefold manner: 1) as a space of contact and uniformization of differences where disparities are erased; 2) as a space where two worlds converge and collide, hence leading to estrangement, confrontation and exclusion; and 3) as a space of communication, encounter and interaction.

Space presupposes the existence of frontiers in order to negotiate differences and regulate what is taken in and what is left out. Thinking about space implies thinking its limits, although not necessarily physical or geographical ones. In fact, as António Sousa Ribeiro points out, the frontier only becomes an operating concept when it moves beyond the notion of territorial boundary (Ribeiro, 2001). Also, to Juan Flores, the frontier is not just a physical space; rather, it is associated with all kinds of contacts between dominating and dominated cultures (Flores, 1993).

The constant flow of people, objects and information, as well as the reduction or weakening of physical and imagined frontiers, is reflected not only in socio-political changes but also in the way we think and represent ourselves and in the tools we use to analyze the world we live in, thus fostering the dilution of intellectual barriers and a productive dialogue between disciplines for a better understanding of increasingly less delimited objects of study. The transdisciplinarity provided by Culture Studies helps us recognize and critically assess, from a cultural perspective, how global processes impact society.

Departing from the conflictual relationship between boundedness and unboundedness, limit and limitlessness, this issue aims at exploring the ideas of place and displacement. On the one hand, it investigates modes of thinking and imagining place by analyzing its importance as agent of social memory (Hayden, 1997). On the other, it examines movement, which John Urry defines as “(...) the

ideology and utopia of the twenty-first century” (Urry, 2011: 4), or rather, mobility, described by Tim Cresswell (2006) as movement imbued with social and cultural significance.

In the first article of this issue, “**A Dimensão Dialógica do Exílio em Nostalgia de Andrei Tarkovsky**”, Rui Manuel Brás introduces the question of forced mobility by discussing the traumatic condition of exile in one of Tarkovsky’s most notorious exilic films. The author argues that *Nostalgia* articulates the director’s conflicting relation to the lost fatherland, a relation that oscillates between nostalgia for the imagined origins and the impossibility to retrieve them. While the difficult confrontation with the host society reinforces the exile’s emotional attachment to the lost fatherland, it is only at the symbolic level, through filmic representation, that the idealized return to origins can be accomplished. *Nostalgia* thus conveys the tension between displacement of the present and the longing for an irretrievable past.

In “**Sans Soleil: A Lesson in Témoignage**”, Bonnie S. Gill focuses on Chris Marker’s 1983 film *Sunless* as a vehicle of memory. Opening with a famous quotation by Racine, “The distance between countries compensates somewhat for the excessive closeness of time”, *Sans Soleil* is often deemed as a travelogue or essay-film in which a woman narrates the thoughts of a fictional world traveller, Sandor Krasna, through words and images from places such as Japan, Guinea-Bissau, Iceland and San Francisco. Crossing spatial and temporal distances, Chris Marker’s film, Bonnie S. Gill argues, not only entails a reflection on temporality but also questions the mobility of images – cinematic and otherwise – and the multiple ways in which they shape the memory of places.

The memory of place is also the main concern of Rumi Hara’s “**Memory and Landscape in the Sea Islands Series by Carrie Mae Weems**”. Focusing on the multimedial *Sea Island* series by American artist Carrie Mae Weems, the article examines the visual resonance of slavery in contemporary landscapes. Captured along the Georgia/Carolina coast in the United States, where the African people were once brought to as slaves and their descendants still reside, the images in the *Sea Island Series* render the traumatic and silent past visible. The article contends that Weems’s work, by tracing back familial memory, is not only a quest for home, belonging and rootedness, but also a critical reflection on the memory and representation of slavery and the African diaspora in American history and culture.

Tiziana Nannavechia's "**There is no home to go back to. Life across boundaries: an Italian-Canadian literary perspective**" investigates the complexity of hyphenated identities. Through the study of Italian-Canadian literature, a sub-system of Canadian literature, the author examines migrant narratives as representatives of border-crossing – i.e., as eclectic texts that subvert the limits of culture, language, style and genre. The works of three Italian-Canadian writers (D'Alfonso, Micone and Michelutti), with their heterolinguistic narratives and hybrid literary styles, reflect a sense of fragmentation and deterritorialization, but also a search for identity and the imagination of home that is crucial to migrant literature.

Finally, in "**Navegando entre ilhas culturais e disciplinares. Uma Epistemologia Arquipelágica: João Manuel Varela e a Instabilidade Moderna**", Ana Salgueiro Rodrigues examines João Manuel Varela's contribution to an epistemology of disciplinary integration that coincides largely with the project of Culture Studies. Through the analysis of a number of texts by the Cape Verdean author, the article proposes an epistemological paradigm based on an archipelagic structure. The figure of the archipelago, by clustering the plurality of islands that form it, allows the overcoming of an insular and segmented model of knowledge production and, thus, tackles the complexity of contemporary exchange between cultures.

In probing the material and imaginary boundaries of our world, in unearthing the tensions between roots and uprootedness, fixidity and diaspora, integration and isolation, sameness and otherness, individual and shared memory, the articles included in this issue offer a critical reflection on the modern mobile society in its contradictory, plural and shifting configurations.

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