



Women writers and their destination(s): influences and comparisons, marginalizations and demarginalizations

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This cluster revisits recent developments in women’s writing grouped here around the concept of destination. The plurality in the title serves to underline that just as during the last 5 decades, interest in women’s writing now is not waning. On the contrary, women’s writing remains vital and enticing for interpretation and analysis, as it continues demarginalizations and transcends the frameworks of feminist theory and criticism, thus contributing to the vitality of literary theory through research into many issues that are a destination in the post-millennial period for numerous scholars in the field of literary studies.

This cluster consists of five papers, written by scholars from different countries and belonging to different generations. The scholars write from different literary theory perspectives, although they mostly continue to find inspiration in how the still marginalized woman-subject reacts to the globalized world in which the “norm” continually recedes and many voices can be heard. Therefore, they work from the paradigms of feminisms’ plurals and their associations with aspects that are centred either on the text or on the context, postcolonial criticism, and multicultural theories. The key word that they are focusing on in their papers is destination/destinations, as a kind of a metaphorical border in the post-millennial era that serves as a point at which to stop, rethink, reconsider the previous literary endeavours and place them on the literary map, after all the revisions that have affected the world of literature and literary theory during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Destination/destinations also denotes a place of change, a place that changes either its authors or their characters, their settings, themes, and many other aspects of their works.

When viewed through such a perspective this collection can be defined as a kind of rereading of issues that have remained important during the many waves of feminism, such as the following: binary oppositions; the literary canon; patriarchy; the demarginalization of indigenous women writers; the issue of exilic experience and how it affects the complex field of identity formation; matrilineality or reflection on earlier female tradition; the intertwining of literary genres; the challenging of

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stereotypical notions of womanhood in areas as different as the American South, Middle and Far East and post-Yugoslav countries, in the past and in the present; but also to reflect on the function of literary works in the context of such change, in integration and reintegration into their respective communities.

Correspondingly, this collection of papers presents an important contribution to scholarly research connected with the aforementioned—an array of methods that leads us to a new destination, or destinations, through the fluctuating and magical literary places that bind us to initiate further readings and deeper understandings.

The paper that introduces this cluster is entitled “Traveling for Reciprocity: LeAnne Howe’s *Choctalking on Other Realities*” by Marija Krivokapić from the University of Montenegro. She focuses on the Choctaw author LeAnne Howe’s travels out of the U.S. and her counterhegemonic travelling subject that pushes the boundaries of travel writing and significantly challenges the travel writing theory, which has largely exploited the postcolonial reading tools and developed on an explicit criticism of the traveller’s, to use M.L. Pratt’s phrase, “imperial eyes.” Understanding travel writing as a genre pregnant with signifying practices of the culture that produces it and reflective of the relation between the two sides of the encounter, Krivokapić approaches Howe’s work not only as a literary event, but also as a form of activism, a political act, which can initiate developments in global policy. In contrast to the assumed cultural solipsism of the indigenous subject, LeAnne Howe stamps the instrumentality of native “globality.” She travels to Jerusalem, Jordan, Japan, and Romania to share the destinies of the oppressed peoples and, thus, to enhance her understanding of her own contemporaneity, as being Choctaw and a U.S. citizen at the same time. It is here that she fully employs her concept of tribalogy, “a story that links Indians and non-Indians in an expanding global covenant chain” (682), which initiates possibilities of a context which different epistemological realities and discourses can share. In her argument Krivokapić relies on contemporary travel writing theory and native discussions on authenticity and trans-indigenous identity.

“Destination Levant” by Pii Mustamäki (New York University Abu Dhabi) compares two British chronicles of the Levant, T. E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), an adventure tale, a war-time memoir and a travelogue all at once, which describes the region and its Arab inhabitants at times romantically and admiringly and at times through an Orientalist lens, and the work of Gertrude Bell, who was Lawrence’s contemporary and colleague in archaeology and British Levant intelligence, yet who, unable to entirely separate herself from the Oriental mind-set of the time, strays away from romantic imagery. Many have argued this is due to her gender: in order to gain authority as a regional expert and diplomatic adviser, she had to write in a way that is perceived masculine. Regardless, while her work and diplomatic influence was comparable to Lawrence’s, she is not even closely as well known as her male counterpart. The paper also examines the language Lawrence and Bell employ in their descriptions of the Levant’s scenery and people, looking at their writings primarily as travelogues, but also investigating the language’s relationship to their roles as military and diplomatic advisers and their respective gender roles at the time. Mustamäki argues that the non-fiction genre both Lawrence and Bell worked with, at the intersection of travelogue, memoir and diplomatic endeavours,

gives much more expressive freedom to the male writer. Partly due to this freedom, Lawrence's descriptions come at times closer to the genre of travel writing and do a better job at conveying a fuller image of the Levant.

Biljana Oklopčić from the University of Osijek, Croatia, authors the paper entitled "Destination Yoknapatawpha: Lena Grove's 'Like a lady travelling'" (Faulkner, William. *Light in August*. Vintage, 2005, p. 22). She writes that unlike Southern women writers such as Kate Chopin, Eudora Welty or Flannery O'Connor, who in their fiction reject and subvert stereotypical representations of Southern womanhood of any race or class, William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction offers a stereotypical portrayal of Southern womanhood as he, as Oklopčić emphasizes, "either turns his women characters into belles, mummies, tragic mulattas, spinsters, Confederate women and Dixie Madonnas, thus transforming them into the ghosts of their families' pasts, or depicts his women characters as dominated by love and/or lust, transformed into the embodiments of male testosterone fantasy." In her paper she shows how the travels Lena Grove of *Light in August* (1932) engages in, challenge the stereotypical notions of Southern womanhood in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction. Oklopčić begins with an analysis of women travelers in fiction and non-fiction by Southern female authors and continues with an exploration of women travel writing in the South, trying to detect its traits in Lena's journey through the South, Yoknapatawpha County included, and whether or/and how Lena employs or rejects them, thus setting new standards for the comprehension of women characters in Faulkner's fiction.

In their paper "Demarginalizations and Destination(s) of Post-Yugoslav Literary Canons" Dubravka Đurić (Singidunum University) and Aleksandra Nikčević-Batričević (University of Montenegro) focus on the changing status of female authors in post-Yugoslav literary canons caused by the feminist interventions. They point to the broader context of the fall of communism and the decomposition of socialist Yugoslavia, its transition to capitalism and the reintroduction of feminism. They discuss the different aspects of the politicization of the national canon ranging from pointing to its gender bias, and the restoration of female authors, who have not been part of the canon and they point to the political function of the literary canon in (re)constructing post-socialist, post-Yugoslav national identities and the supporting of female authors as part of the process of European-integration, as well as the possibilities of experimental writing in post-Yugoslav literatures. The essential thing in their paper is to point to feminist reception of post-Yugoslav literatures as important part of the processes of reconciliation after the Yugoslav war in the first part of the 1990s. In the final part of the paper they discuss the anxieties caused by feminism and the stance of most female authors who seek the diversification of female literary production, which will move between the positions of particularity and universality.

In "Destination England: Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Caryl Phillips's *The Final Passage*" Burçin Erol, from Hacettepe University, Ankara, compares these two partly autobiographical novels, whose female protagonists, born and bred in former British colonies of Nigeria and St. Kitts, travel to "the mother country" where they hope to realize the dream lives promoted to them by the colonial education system. However, the paper then focuses on their different experience of the new homeland, which does offer prosperous future for one, yet still remains

an antagonistic residence for the other in terms of cultural practice and of climate. Erol places this analysis against a wider historical, political, and social background, concerning the experience of a number of immigrants arriving in England, to whom England appeared as either a destination of freedom or of disillusionment and dissatisfaction.

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