

## INTRODUCTION

[...] what unsettles the world must also unsettle Canada—a post-colonial country whose cities are among the most ethnically diverse on the planet, and where the rate of environmental change has pitched us all into unknown territory. We are a people who remember and forget simultaneously, slowly learning to share a land that persistently eludes a single language.

Madeleine THIEN, Introduction to *Granta* 14

Such are the words by the Canadian novelist Madeleine Thien in her introduction to the November 2017 issue of *Granta*, co-edited with Catherine Leroux. Before their bilingual introduction implements Canadian state policies, online readers are welcome into the volume by an explicit invitation to delve into the numerous ways in which the contributors' imaginaries address issues of place, reconciliation, belonging and truth in present-day Canada, which might construct a broad avenue into new times. Yet contemporary Canada must be discomfited by what perturbs the rest of the globe, in Thien's words borrowed above, and that involvement with the world will reconfigure the ways of imagining Canada's present and future alike, a re-articulation in view of the global, but also in the eyes of the global. This may be construed as a gesture to pursue the worldly approval and recognition of a domestic effort of global civility which evinces how, from inside out and outside in, geopolitical and human borders are endowed with a tangible permeability which further complicates the ongoing multiplication, and parallel erasure, of territorial and imaginary boundaries. The condition of the present flag-bears that frontier permeability in its display of globality, the social condition born out of the productive intersection among some of the pillars supporting globalization. The flows of people(s) and goods, or cultures, the opening of markets, the time/space compression, or environmental concerns related to the depletion of natural habitats all come to constitute a conglomerate of circumstances that to a higher or lesser extent impregnates our everyday realities. A tangible presence of technological media completes the panorama with their intervention in our everyday, quotidian scenes. The intersections of all these vectors hold sway prominently in early 21st-century Canadian literary production, sharpening its current internationalism and modifying the landscapes of its worldwide distribution and readership. Thien and Leroux's edition of *Granta* is a consequence of, and attests to, that global appeal of contemporary Canadian writing, increasingly aware of its reflections in global mirrors.

Issue 78 of *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*: "Canadian Fictions of Globality" aims at analyzing how a minute, singled-out field of sociological

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overtone ingrained in the all-encompassing dynamics of globalization is being engaged with in the fictional (and critical) literary production ascribed to present-day Canada. The scholarly responses next tackle globality from various angles: is it a condition of the postmodern present? Given Canada's nuanced relation with the international parameters of culture from its genesis, is globality a *fiction* of newness worth appending to cultural manifestations for marketing purposes? Is the presumed irrelevance of borders so apparent, when everyday news seems to suggest otherwise? In the wake of the increasing visibility of globalized communities, which new mechanisms are adopted to demarcate community boundaries anew after their transgression? The Canadian narratives selected by the contributors for this volume embody a mandatory groundwork for their multifarious materialization of global imaginaries and their production of a plethora of answers to the questions above. However, the production of these imaginaries also goes hand-in-hand with an ostensible marketing gimmick that turns cultural manifestations into commodities that enable the state-sanctioned multicultural order, which is then launched overseas as a powerful icon of the global alignments of isochronic pieces. Accordingly, Canadian fictions may reproduce globality inside the boundaries of the state –in their presentation of locally-coloured realities from elsewhere, in their adoption of globalized concerns like ecology and the relevance conceded to human designs of interspecies' coexistence, for example, and outside, in their promotion of Canada as the epitome of a microcosmic global society, one that allots space for its own counter-arguments. Many of the debates with deep roots in Canadian society are indeed filtered into our critical globality in the materialized emphases, for example, on the national and global impulses in parallel, as well as the local zeal and the enthusiasm for the international designs mapped by recent Canadian narratives. As Robert Zacharias (21) and Lawrence Hill (183) have seen in their contributions to this issue, it is not strange, therefore, that the severe localism of Alice Munro's fiction has been awarded the 2013 Nobel Prize, whereas Madeleine Thien's 2016 *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, with hardly any inclusion of Canadian settings or motifs, has been awarded, among others, the renowned Canadian Giller Prize.

As some of the essays that the reader may find after this introduction confirm, within the coordinates of globality, the abiding revision of discourses of sameness and difference is prolific to eventually make room for multifaceted approaches to Canadianness from the various ends of shifting politics of location; from diverse gender or sexual configurations, as well as ethnic belonging, or (post-) human embodiments. The diversity of intersections that the fictions scrutinized in this volume may draw on the contemporary map replicates the situations from which the assembled scholars write about Canada: the views from Canadianists nationwide are complemented by those writing from France, Norway or Spain. From our specific spot off the African coast, midway between the former European transatlantic routes to America, our own geographical position in the Canary Islands also bespeaks a history of global transit, which incidentally has left intertextual traces in our present as academics attentive to any presumed horizontal flow of cultural influences with no intervention of power asymmetries in contact zones and transactions. The voices that this special issue features are also used to transcontinen-



tal contact, to meet *en route* thanks to the provisionality provided by national and international forums inside and outside Canada, in Europe and in America, or by funding programs hosted on both sides of the Atlantic. This issue is therefore nurtured by how contemporary critical writing is ineluctably imbricated in the movements of global culture, however oxymoronic the relation between the two terms appears, a maze of junctures where economic, political, cultural or environmental factors tightly intersperse. Their confluence seems to suggest that the global is neither the antithesis of the local, nor that of the national. Instead, and as a result of their compressed spatio-temporal proximity, they are all dragged into hybrid grounds which deform the traits historically defining these terms at their *origin*, to advocate new, transient and transitory morphologies.

In fact, the proliferation of narratives of metaphorical and literal displacement bring to the fore a remarkable degree of mobility between local and global zones, urban and rural sites, metropolises and depopulated areas, thus averting easy one-to-one identifications between thematics and settings. Reading back and forth the essays presented next, terms like *hemispheric* are prodigal in an attempt to place the focus on the commonality of concerns along continental geopolitical spheres. They strive for visibility with others like *transoceanic* and *transcontinental*, which bring to mind echoes of time present, but also past, and therefore somehow dismiss the presentism attributed to the current global modes, while putting forward the pressing urgency to historicise globalization processes, and the equally pressing insistence on their materiality in the areas sometimes affected by the political, economic, cultural and military expansion of Europe. That expansionist impulse is nowadays moulded by neocolonial powers, sometimes shielded by an apparent altruistic restoration of liberties and fundamental rights elsewhere. Those interventions are also under the critical focus of globality for their forceful erasure of political borders, first, and second, for the personal and national reconstruction of boundaries accompanying them to face, for example, the massive arrival of displaced populations to western countries, which trigger once again conflicts of assimilation and integration often tied to situations of contingent adjacency. Challenges to neoliberal projects of diversity and integration are abundant in the shape of post-human queries, while dystopian and speculative narrative modes open windows for (not so) distant realities that may convey a reflection about our daily societies, as some of the contributions have insightfully detected in their analyses.

Given the attention to the various border transgressions that it couches, this issue has afforded to dismantle the thematic/critical boundary between the essay and the interview section on the one hand, and, on the other, the generic frontier separating the interview and the final review. Conducted by Ana María Fraile-Marcos, the interview section presents readers with Lawrence Hill's reflections on the current internationalism of Canadian writing and that of his own recent fiction. Hill also accounts for the importance of his visits to Spain in his literary production and explains how the historical racial conflicts set in the Spanish mainland have shaped his views on the critical construction of race. His steady commitment to represent racialized subjectivities within and beyond Canadian boundaries, or his involvement in the process of adapting his fiction to screen within the frames of



the present-day interconnectivity of writers and their wide-ranging audiences, are all ingrained in the designs of globality. The general field of Black Canadian writing also seems to be a paradigmatic reflection of such a design, as the review section suggests. Readers will find there Sara Casco-Solís and Ana María Fraile-Marcos' analysis of Winfried Siemerling's *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History and the Presence of the Past*, which provides an updated and rigorous examination of Black Canadian writing to eventually resituate it within the global parameters of black diasporic cultural production. Their review of Siemerling's book further enhances the author's own viewpoints included in his essay, which turns out one more thematic and critical overflow informed by that porosity of borders featuring globality, and shaped in this case by a vigorous, contemporary critical interest in Black Canadian studies. Situated between the essays and the final review, a dependency on precedent and following information to be *global* in content and scope also propels the interview section, which follows the group of essays.

In the opening contribution, "The Long History of CanLit's New Globality, or: When *The History of Emily Montague* Became Canada's First Novel," Robert Zacharias adopts the ambivalence of our suggested "fictions of globality" to discuss the problematic newness with which our key theme is habitually endowed, thus interrogating the *contemporary* constituent of the global in the case of Canada. With especial reference to Frances Brooke's novel, usually regarded as the igniting spark of the national literary tradition, Zacharias underlines its material history of transoceanic origins and its appropriation within the scope of nationalist campaigns to eventually hold that the condition of the global often predates the coinage of an adequate terminology to describe it. In turn, Claire Omhovère makes the Canadian north, one of the usual intertexts oft-brandished by nationalist endeavours, the target of her article "Snow White and the Polar Bears in the Age of Global Heating: A Reading of Mark Anthony Jarman's 'My White Planet'". She isolates the ecological concerns central to globality and Jarman's 2008 short story to analyze the ethical implications conveyed by human interventions in the surrounding landscape to capitalist ends and worldwide consequences. In the context of a parodic rewriting of "Little Snow White" (1812), Jarman's text seems to offer an incursion into a world ravaged by technological dependence and the human degradation of natural environments, a recurrent concern in some of the essays.

Crossing the American continent from north to south and beyond, María Jesús Llarena-Ascanio's critical approach in "Another Way of Naming Elsewhere?: Transnational and Hemispheric Stories by some Canadian and Argentinian Authors," highlights thematic parity and the common use of narrative techniques in some contemporary fictions by a number of writers, joined, among other factors, by their immigrant origin and their international careers. Her analysis detects a thematic iterativity seemingly indebted to similar experiences of past trauma, political repression, colonialism and passage to new settings, where the equilibrium between demanded assimilation and memory preservation looms large. Situating thematics along and across political borders and languages opens the panoramic view widely to embrace an ampler path to methodological, critical and imaginative hemispheric cross-feeding. The geographies of Continental America intersectionally cross with



those of Europe in Winfried Siemerling's "Austin Clarke: 'Membering Home and the Black Atlantic,'" where, with special attention to the chapter "The Green Door House," Siemerling reads the Barbadian Canadian's 2015 memoir, ambivalently titled *Membering*, to shed some light onto his strategies of experiential repossession at imaginative and spiritual levels. They allow the novelist to freely revisit the enclaves branded by the presence of transatlantic slavery, Siemerling states, in an act of interweaving personal and collective histories to attempt to reconstruct a sense of belonging and memorial ownership across the black Atlantic.

The two articles that follow delve into dystopian worlds, which pose a different defiance and give a number of ethical responses to present-day realities. In "Thank you for Creating this World for all of us: Globality and the Reception of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* after its Television Adaptation," Pilar Somacarrera-Íñigo critically reads the success achieved by the TV screenplay of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel. The series was boosted in its first season by Atwood's personal involvement in the televisual script and, as Somacarrera-Íñigo contends, by a massive bulk of internet news items and social media lobbying, not to mention the coincidental public filtration of a number of misogynist comments by US President Donald Trump. Appropriated rapidly by a conglomerate of Trump's opponents as a reflection of his potential, the television series has been globally marketed, disseminated and consumed within the porous borders of globality and its constituents of worldwide interconnectivity. Diana Brydon's "Risk, Mortality, and Memory: The Global Imaginaries of Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves*, M.G. Vassanji's *Nostalgia*, and André Alexis's *Fifteen Dogs*," in turn, scrutinizes these three recent Canadian novels in sight of an overall critique of the metanarrative of human(ist) progress, and as a way to reflect on issues of creativity, mastery and purity *vis-à-vis* our inescapable mortal condition to finally elucidate how it co-opts questions of personal agency. Brydon's appreciation lets us see alternative engagements with the construction of community boundaries, or group and individual subjectivity when the nation-state appears either perilous or helpless to face potent global flows.

Finally, to close this volume, three affect-based approaches triangulate readers' interest and present them with the plausibility of post-human love, the counterdiscursive yield of human emotions against the 'war on terror' metanarrative, and the urgency of responsive agency through trans and queer lenses. First, Kit Dobson's "More or Less Human: Resilience, Vulnerability, and Love in Neoliberal Times," develops a theoretical frame for such an emotion to focus next on Dionne Brand's 2014 novel *Love Enough*, and eventually argue that Canadian fictions of globality incorporate post-human tools to defy the solidification of the prescriptive forms of human embodiment dictated by neoliberal governance. Second, Belén Martín-Lucas' "Masculinity in the Metanarrative of the Global War on Terror: Shauna Singh Baldwin's *Transnational Critique*," proposes a feminist and decolonial examination of *We Are not in Pakistan* (2007). She reads through a wide range of reactions within the post 9/11 aura of global shock to be analysed in relation to representations of masculinity, and concludes the existence of a frequent transcultural commonality of emotions across class and race that might provide a strategic angle to deconstruct recent neoimperialist moves. Through its transCanadian perspective and affective



emphasis, this essay links finally to Libe García Zarranz's "Where Is the Transgender in the TransCanadian? Kai Cheng Thom and Vivek Shraya's Response-Able Fictions," which tracks the presence/absence of the transgender cultural production within such a referential scope. Impelled by the growing presence of racist and transphobic reactions, García Zarranz matches the critical need to contest homo/transphobic attitudes from the premises of ethical responsibility and sustainable productive action, which materialize in her reading of Thom's *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir* (2016) and Shraya's *She of the Mountains* (2014), multimodal critiques of the violence inflicted on trans and queer collectives.

To end, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to all contributors and referees for having found some space within their maze of in-progress work schedules, which were in the end tensile enough to accommodate one more article, and for their generous supply of time to write their papers and unfailingly face a number of subsequent revisions. They have indeed made it evident that academics know how to compress space and time, as our early 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly demands from those of us living in the interstices of globality.

