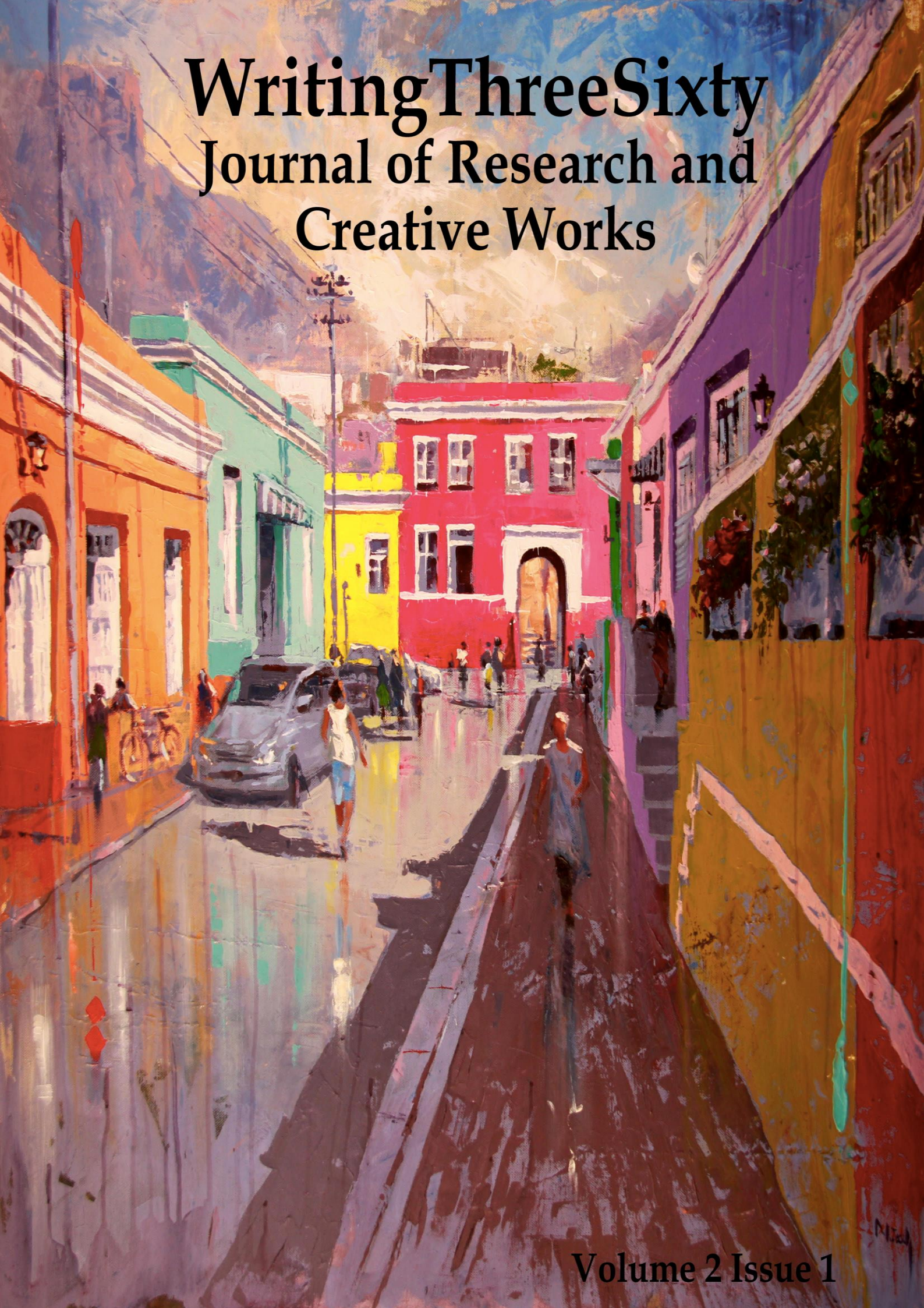
WritingThreeSixty
Journal of Research and Creative Works



Volume 2 Issue 1

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Table of Contents

Note from the Editors

WritingThreeSixty is a bi-annual, interdisciplinary journal for research essays and creative works. First launched in 2014 as an initiative of the English department at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), *WritingThreeSixty* now forms part of the broader community within the Arts Faculty and Humanities at UWC.

This journal maintains the standard of peer review and wishes to provide a platform to develop a culture of publishing among postgraduate and emerging students, as well as established creative artists within UWC and South Africa at large.

WritingThreeSixty also forms part of co-curricular graduate culture at UWC that affords students the opportunity to develop professional skills through the many voluntary leadership and service positions created through the journal. These positions include the management of the journal and its team, editorial outputs, as well as our digital marketing efforts that are presented through social media and our online website.

Volume 2 Issue 1

Welcome to our first issue of 2016!

In this issue we are crossing borders, as not only do we feature two international pieces of work (one from a student in Germany and another from an artist in Iraq), but we also include works of art that extend beyond poetry and short fiction. We feel these works of art are equally reflective of the disruptive 'postcolonial' space and time that the journal finds itself growing in.

We invite you to read, and engage with the works featured in this issue.

"When we seem to have won or lost in terms of certainties, we must, as literature teachers in the classroom, remember such warnings -- let literature teach us that there are no certainties, that the process is open, and that it may be altogether salutary that it is so." — Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Death of a Discipline

Yours Sincerely,
Nehna, Martina and Mike

Poetry

Porcelain in Glass

It's just a little glass box
And I am just a porcelain doll
Praying my escape
Yet staring at an open door

Can't breathe in this little glass box
Survive another 'being under'
Exit as painful as it welcomes yet another enter

These gasps for air ruin me
The moans
I hate these curtains
His smile robs me of me
What is freedom to those chained by love?
When that love carries scars, bruises, and sins?

One, two, three
We almost there
Four, five, six, please break this glass box
Black out, nine, ten
What strength is there in fear?
What relief is there in the 'end'?
When the 'end' is him drinking my tears?

Can't you see?
I am just a porcelain doll
And this is my home, my prison,
My little glass box.

- Simonne Stellenboom

The Fed Up Woman

Your detestable words aim to strike me
Incessantly, rapidly surging forth
Like the Trojan warrior's shooting spears
penetrating the mounting layers and building blocks
of my gentle female flesh.
Cherubic Cupid's unwanted bow
Captured in every strike and forceful blow
That crashes like the tempestuous wave upon
the immovable and helpless rock.
Ought I to believe the promises of love that
flow through the passages of these hearing devices
when the cloth of your mind is not drenched in the stench
of the alcoholic river?
Ought I to trust the tarnished hand that repeatedly finds itself
Colliding and crashing like a bumping car
Into the barely steadfast pole?
Actions bear consequences;
The power of the torch runs out when it is exploited and misused
Darkness succumbs and submits to
The inevitable powerful light of the breaking day
TEMPT ME NOT…
to extinguish the greedy fire that aims to destroy,
to block the wind that attempts to destabilize the tree
A fire causes destruction BUT
Water is its enemy.

- Lorenzo van Schalkwyk

Essay

Interculturality in African Fiction: Leila Aboulela's *The Translator*

Abstract

This essay examines the term 'interculturality', meaning the relationship between cultures, from the perspective of literary studies. Leila Aboulela's novel The Translator – which is not just a typical love story but also deals with important facets of biographies in modern globalized settings – is used as an example to show how identities become influenced by the clash of different cultures. The concepts of being a stranger and of being at home start to blend and are no longer clearly defined and separated from one another. On the example of the female protagonist Sammar, a Muslim woman from Khartoum who moves to Scotland, the novel deals with the aspects of intercultural encounters and raises questions about the 'translatability' of cultures and religions. It approaches these concerns through a postcolonial lens, drawing into view the impact of Westernization and modernization on Africa. The novel also reaches for a deeper understanding of the experiences of being a stranger, of belonging and of being at home.

Between Cultures – Interculturality and Interstitial Identities

In the increasingly globalized world, in which boundaries become more and more porous, it is necessary to reassess concepts that seemed to be absolute and unquestionable. The idea of culture as a homogeneous and restricted entity, as a body delimited from the outside, for example, does not seem appropriate any longer. Categories of home and belonging, which are part of identifying with a culture, society or place, become increasingly blurred. It is the most basic distinction between the self and the other that, in the process of globalization

and the obscuring of borders, seems to become more imprecise and indistinct. Therefore, experiences of 'trans-', 'cross-' or 'interculturality' [1] are global phenomena that do not only influence theoretical and scientific approaches but almost every interpersonal encounter in general. The term 'interculturality' has become more important in everyday vocabulary and is commonly understood as the interaction between different cultures. This essay, when discussing the term 'intercultural', refers to this general understanding as described by the authors Fred E. Jandt and Donald W. Klopf. According to these two scholars, intercultural encounters are defined as interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Jandt 13; Klopf 63f). This approach implies an understanding of the concept of culture as a unity, in which a group of people shares the same patterns of behaviour, values and beliefs.

This cultural pattern is "the blueprint that determines the way we think, feel, and behave" (Klopf 35). Consequently, culture is not only a part, but also – and even more significantly – a major determinant of every individual's identity and orientation system (Jandt 6ff; Klopf 34f).

While this understanding of 'interculturality' is useful to outline major themes in Aboulela's novel, it is, however, crucial to also explore the inclinations and problems that arise with this term. Consequently, this analysis intends to go beyond the above definition and to critically question the concept of 'culture' that is brought forward by referring to 'intercultural' relations.

German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch discusses this aspect comprehensively in his essay *Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of*

[1] The terms 'crosscultural', 'transcultural' and 'intercultural' are often used as synonyms. From an academic perspective, however, this practice is questionable. Wolfgang Welsch, for example, who will be referred to in this article, draws a strict distinction between the concepts of 'inter-' and 'transculturality' as well as 'globalization' and 'multiculturality'. A detailed definition and distinction of these terms would go beyond the possibilities and purposes of this essay. Therefore, it will concentrate on the concept of 'interculturality' and distinguish it further by giving an insight in Welsch's theory of 'transculturality'.

Cultures Today (1999). As already mentioned above, our understanding of 'culture' as a closed and homogenous entity does not seem appropriate any longer in an ever-changing and global world. These aspects will be explored in more detail by drawing upon *The Translator* as a literary example.

In general, the experience of coming across foreign traditions and beliefs is part of most modern-life narratives and can also be traced in literature. In many writings, the experience of *the Other* and the search for *home* and *belonging* are growing motifs. Intercultural encounters have not only emerged with the beginning of the modern age but can be seen as universal phenomena. They are implicit in human existence and society in general, as interactions between different ethnicities, social groups, religions or families have taken place since the earliest times of human history but the process of globalization, which is characterised by growing technologies and communication systems, a decrease in economic boundaries and rising migration possibilities and rates, is the reason for an intensification of intercultural contacts as well as cultural and ethnic transformations (Jandt 2007: 9-13; Klopf 1998: 3-17).

African literature in particular seems to incorporate this aspect as a major focus. This essay seeks to show through the example of the Sudanese female writer, Leila Aboulela, the importance of the discourse of interculturality in an African context. Her novel, *The Translator,* does not simply unfold as a love story between two characters from different cultural backgrounds; it deals in a profound way with the problems of intercultural encounters and raises questions about the 'translatability' of cultures and religions. It approaches these concerns through a postcolonial lens, drawing into view the impact of Westernization and modernization on African biographies. The novel also explores the experiences of being a stranger, of belonging and of being at home (Araujo 2014: 166ff; Cooper 2008: 43; Steiner 2008: 7-11).

Aboulela's fiction, thus, raises many questions that are also highly topical in a number of academic disciplines, among them sociology and translation studies. An analysis of the novel, which links the fictional representation of intercultural encounters with different theoretical approaches, allows one to gain a more complex understanding of Aboulela's work.

It is interesting to consider details of the author's biography when analysing the representation of interculturality in her fiction. Although Aboulela was born in 1964 in Cairo, Egypt, the homeland of her mother, she grew up in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, which was her father's country. Thus, it is clear that for Aboulela, home itself was intercultural. She had further experience with interculturality when she attended an American primary school. Later, she went to the Catholic Sisters' School in Khartoum, even though she was raised in a Muslim family. This means that she encountered at school a different system of symbols, beliefs and behaviours than at home. She was exposed to a different culture with its specific patterns. After finishing her degree in Economics at the University of Khartoum, she went to Great Britain for further education at the London School of Economics. There she studied for her Master's degree in Statistics. She married and moved with her husband to Scotland, where she lectured and published her first books (Cooper 2008: 43f). This shows Aboulela's personal experience of interculturality. Moreover, the mere fact that Aboulela is a Sudanese writer with a Western education is a classic example of an intercultural identity.

In *The Translator*, Aboulela constructs a central female character, Sammar, who seems to have a lot in common with the author herself. Sammar shares with the author the experience of interculturality. The main character of the novel was born in Scotland but raised in Khartoum. There she met her cousin, childhood friend, and later husband, Tarig. He took Sammar back to Aberdeen where he studied medicine. Being confronted with

the foreign culture of Scotland, Sammar clearly experiences the phenomenon of interculturality. In *The Translator* it is quite clear that Sudanese culture and even more importantly the religion of Islam are determining aspects in defining the identity of the protagonist (Steiner 2008: 8). In fact, it is quite hard to separate cultural and religious determinants since they are intertwined. Sammar's bond to the Sudanese culture becomes visible, in particular, when she talks about her life and recalls her childhood memories.

The heroine thinks about an old habit of hers "to reinvent the beginnings of her life. Make believe that she was born at home in Sudan" (Aboulela 2001: 5). This indicates that she experiences Sudan as her place of heritage and that it forms her cultural 'blueprint'. It is the same with Sammar's relation to Islam. Her religion determines her behaviour and thought patterns. This consideration can be found throughout the novel, for example, when she reminds herself: "'My fate is etched out by Allah Almighty, if and who I will marry, what I eat, the work I find, my health, the day I will die are as He alone wants them to be.'" (74) The strong impact of religion on the heroine is portrayed in this passage. These two extracts of the novel indicate that the two key determinants of the main character's personality are her native Sudanese culture and her bond to the religion of Islam.

Apart from the Sudanese culture, other cultures have an impact on Sammar's behaviour, thoughts and emotions. Because of her life in Aberdeen, she is influenced by Western culture. The cultural differences that she experiences in England are a shock at first. After some time, however, she experiences these things as normalities and becomes used to the new Scottish environment, customs and people. "Sammar walked to work through familiar streets. […] Even certain people's faces had become familiar over time." (71). Additional factors that indicate the ways in which she is partly shaped by Western culture are that she is fluent in English,

that she has a "British passport" because she "was born in Britain" (73), and that she works at the University of Aberdeen as a translator for Rae Isles, a Middle East historian and lecturer in Postcolonial Politics. Because of her job, she is incorporated into Scottish society and is familiar with the required work ethic. Furthermore, the ability to speak English enables her to be part of European as well as global culture.

Regarding Aboulela's construct of a female protagonist that is shaped by two very different societies, this essay arrives at the point of reviewing the term 'interculturality'. It is apparent that German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch's understanding of culture is of importance in this context. Welsch argues that the "classical model of culture is not only descriptively unserviceable, but also normatively dangerous and untenable. What is called for today is a departure from this concept and to think of cultures beyond the contraposition of ownness and foreignness" (1999: 2). With this ideology he contradicts the statement by Jandt and Klopf who define 'culture' as a unity. Welsch suggests 'transculturality' as a term to explain the contemporary situation.

For him individuals shaped by cultures are not delimited and unambiguous units but hybrid, interconnected beings and, thus, lacking a clear boundary between the self and the other (4ff). This aspect becomes visible not only in the figure of Sammar but also in the representation of cultures in the novel. The heroine, as shown above, falls under the influence of Sudanese and British culture, which is symbolized by her ability to speak Arabic and English. Her biography – she is a child of Sudanese parents, was born in Britain but raised in Sudan, is living in Aberdeen and returns to Khartoum – also underlines her transcultural personality (Cooper 2008: 44). Furthermore, Aboulela's illustration of culture in general shows a similar understanding as given by Welsch. There seem to be no clear boundaries between the cultures, which can be explored in various situations throughout the novel.

The Scottish or Western culture as depicted by Aboulela, for example, does not appear as a homogeneous entity. It is undermined by figures such as Rae, a Scottish Islamic scholar of Middle East history, or Yasmin, Rae's secretary and Sammar's friend who has Pakistani parents but was born and grew up in Great Britain. Both are in-between-characters and situated between the different cultures. This will be analysed further below, in association to the figure of Rae Isles and his connection to Sammar. Therefore, these two characters are also examples of Welsch's idea of cultural hybrids. In addition to that, Aboulela shows the influence the Western and African culture have on each other – a Westernisation of Africa can be seen just as clearly as the Africanization of the Western world – through the eyes of her heroine who experiences a change within certain traditions. Sammar's aunt's household in Sudan serves as an example of cultural mixing at a material level.

It is characterized by Miranda, 7Up and Coke bottles as well as "Nivea cream, the blue tin of luxury that came with a German ad on TV" (Aboulela 2001: 45). These products stand for the influence of the West on Sudanese culture, which does not appear as a homogenous entity delimited from the outside (Cooper 2008: 50). Aboulela's understanding of culture as transcultural is the basis of her heroine's personality and situatedness in-between cultures. Insofar as Sammar's identity is transcultural to begin with, it may make it easier for the character to deal with the life between Sudan and Scotland. For this analysis it is crucial to move away from Herder's classic idea of cultures – as also carried forward by Jandt and Klopf – as units that have clear and impermeable boundaries. Nevertheless, the term interculturality will not be abandoned as such but needs to be readjusted in the sense that it refers to a transcultural world with blurring boundaries between different cultures.

After Sammar has lost her husband in a car accident and is left alone with their baby, Amir, she decides to leave the child in the care of Tarig's mother, Mahasen, who is living in Khartoum. Sammar herself has gone back to Scotland, where the first part of the novel takes place and where she is working as a translator for the University of Aberdeen. She falls in love with Rae Isles, the university professor for whom she does translations, and they soon have to face cultural and religious differences that divide them from each other. Sammar goes back to Khartoum and decides to stay with her stepmother and son until Rae comes back into her life. These events show Sammar's confrontation with interculturality on different levels – she is living between Khartoum and Aberdeen, in love with a British man whilst her son is raised in Sudan.

The specific plot of the novel highlights intercultural concerns in a way that echoes academic analyses of cultural experience, but also uniquely poses different questions and answers. For example, how do the diverse-lived realities of individuals contrast with theoretical ideas about intercultural encounters? What impact does interculturality have on the experience of being a stranger, on the notion of home, or on the desire to belong? More pointedly, in the context of a with romantic love at its heart, how does desire shape interculturality or how does interculturality shape desire? How does the protagonist's central religious self-reflection fit in with the concept of culture? What role does literature play in this context and how does it not only represent examples of intercultural encounters, but also propose new ways of resolving cultural tensions? Leila Aboulela's novel seems to be deeply linked with these theoretical questions as it enables one to gain an insight into interculturality from a different point of view.

At Home in Love: The Global Stranger and Belonging

The female protagonist of *The Translator* appears as a global stranger who is in constant search of a home. She incorporates the same features that characterize the prototype of a stranger as outlined by the sociologist Georg Simmel. Additionally, she carries within herself a desire to belong and to be at home which connects her with the ideas of Rosemary Marangoly George. However, she does not seem to find this home in either place – neither in the alien British culture nor in her native country, Sudan. Home for Sammar can be found in love and, more significantly, in her belief in God. "In faith, nostalgia is fulfilled, not by offering a geographical sense of belonging to a particular location, but by stilling this longing for home in a spiritual sense" (Steiner 2008: 15). It proves highly productive to consider the first section of the novel, which takes place in Scotland, through the lens of Georg Simmel's concept of 'the Stranger' and the second part of the novel through George's ideas about home and belonging.

In Aberdeen, Sammar is a cultural stranger. According to Simmel's concept, a stranger is defined as being a "wanderer […] who comes today and stays tomorrow" (185). This suggests that strangers are not historically, socially, or culturally connected with the place they find themselves in; they do not originally belong to it. They are somewhat part of the outside world and at the same time attached to the inside of the new society, have a fixed position in it and interact with its members (184f). This dimension is illustrated, for example, at the beginning of the novel, where Sammar and Rae are walking through a garden in Aberdeen with "[t]ropical plants cramped in the damp warmth and orange fish in running water. Whistling birds flying indoors, the grey sky irrelevant above the glass ceiling" (Aboulela 2001: 4). The greenhouse in the Scottish "Duthie Park" (3) with its foreign plants, animals and alien climate is a perfect example of the amalgamation of proximity and distance. The tropical garden, just

like Sammar, is a display of the outside, but at the same time, it represents the foreign fauna and flora through a British perspective and is, thus, part of the inside. Sammar incorporates these characteristics of Simmel's stranger.

Simmel regards the stranger from the perspective of the society. He foregrounds this experience from a point of view that lies inside the culture looking out at the foreigner. However, in *The Translator* the focus does not lie on how Sammar appears to the Scottish 'natives'. It is mostly the protagonist who experiences herself as a stranger. Thus, the heroine is the main focaliser, but one who self-consciously imagines how others see her as a foreigner. This shifting perspective on the stranger requires some flexibility in the analysis. Simmel's concept of the stranger includes the two components of remoteness and nearness. Firstly, it can be seen how Sammar as a stranger in Aberdeen represents the feature of distance. She carries with her the feeling of being foreign in the sense that she does not really belong to this place, its culture, its belief and behavioural patterns, even though she was born in Aberdeen and has a British passport. It is "another world" (Aboulela 2001: 21) for her as her life and identity is strongly shaped by Sudanese culture and the religion of Islam.

> "In Aboulela's fiction, particularly in her novel *The Translator*, the alien and fragmented world of exile is countered by nostalgic dreams of rootedness and cultural tradition, which stem from the culture of origin and are fuelled by sensual memories of a youth spent in the Sudan. The contrast in the fiction between a present of dislocation and the memories of a better past allows Aboulela to use nostalgia as a tool to criticise of Western culture and as a defence mechanism against acculturation" (Steiner 2008: 13).

As shown in Steiner's analysis, Sammar shows a deep feeling of uprootedness and dislocation, a longing for home, and a nostalgic sentiment. The contrasting weather conditions of her

home country and Scotland are often given as a symbol of her alienation in the British environment. The Arab-African woman has "to shiver with incomprehension and suffer as every inadequately dressed African suffers in the alien British cold" (Aboulela 2001: 65). Contrastingly, Sammar often longs for the warm climate, the sun and the sky of Khartoum. Also, with regards to personal relations, she experiences the differences between her and others, which makes her a stranger in Aberdeen. This becomes visible, for example, in the relation to Lesley, an elderly lady who lives in the same house as the novel's main character, whom "Sammar had addressed […] as Aunt once out of politeness" (31). This seems strange to Lesley, which can be seen in her reaction as she "had replied, taken aback, 'I'm not your aunt,' […] 'Call me Lesley'" (32).

This incident shows Sammar's cultural distance. Her habit of addressing an unfamiliar elderly person as 'Aunt' is not common in British culture and exposes her as a stranger. According to Sammar's Sudanese background, however, it is an act of politeness and respect. Another example of the main character's cultural remoteness is her relation to Diane, a British student that shares her office with Sammar. "Diane was [...] nearly eight years her junior and so independent in comparison to how Sammar had been at that age. Independent and a […] source of culture shock" (72). When comparing herself to Diane, the female protagonist notices her difference to those who are 'insiders' of the Scottish culture and society. She imagines how she must appear as a complete outsider and stranger. Diane seems to be the complete opposite to Sammar. The Scottish student is characterized by the fast food products she likes to consume: "her usual accessories of pens, Diet Coke, Yorkie bars, a ham and pickle sandwich" (72).

These items seem to symbolize the differences between Sammar's culture, which is characterized in terms of foods that

must be carefully prepared, illustrated by "sacks of dried vegetables, tins from faraway places, […] chili sauce and tins of beans, the ingredients written out in Arabic, packed in a warm place on another continent" (66), as well as by her homemade soup that she cooks for Rae. These objects, which distinguish the two female characters, are a clear indication of the cultural differences between them (Cooper 2008: 48-54). They symbolically show Sammar's culturally remote position as a stranger as outlined by Georg Simmel.

After exploring the main character's distance from society, however, it can also be seen that she incorporates Simmel's contrasting idea of being 'near', which forms the combination of remoteness and proximity in the stranger. The heroine is 'near' in the sense of being a part of society because of the fact that she has a job and speaks English. However, when the main character of the story was first confronted with British culture, she experienced "culture shocks. Things that jarred – an earring on a man's earlobe, a woman walking a dog big enough to swallow the infant she was at the same time pushing in a pram, the huge billboards on the roads" (Aboulela 2001: 71).

However, she adapts to the new culture quickly and gets used to these impressions:

> "Now Sammar did not notice these things, did not gaze at them, alarmed, as she had done years before. Her eyes had grown numb over the years and she had found out, gradually, and felt reassured, that she was not alone, that not everyone believed what the billboards said, not everyone understood why that woman kept such a large ferocious dog in her home" (71).

This indicates that Sammar, as a stranger, is not only distant from British society, but also a part of it as she familiarises herself with the new culture and learns that other people have similar views to hers.

Furthermore, Simmel refines his theory by identifying closeness as that concept formed out of human universals, which at the same time, creates a feeling of remoteness. This distance comes into being "insofar as these similarities extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people" (187). However, this also means that the stranger is close because of common features of a national, social, occupational or generally human nature. This aspect can be explored, again, by using the example of the relation between Sammar and Diane. On a more general level, Sammar feels close to Diane. She can imagine her as a close friend. At the same time, however, the universality of these connecting points, which are too broad to create intimate bonds, and the cultural differences between the two women make Sammar feel distanced from her. This can be seen, for example, when the two female characters talk about their future plans and the idea of marriage.

In this situation, Sammar imagines that if she had "been back home and Diane one of her old friends, she would have replied, 'Are you mad? You want to live celibate all your life!' and they both would have started laughing. Here, she just said quietly to Diane, 'Maybe you'll change your mind and get married one day'" (Aboulela 2001: 73). Although Sammar is close to Diane because of more general similarities, they are nevertheless remote because of the fact that these characteristics are not unique for their relation.

Another aspect mentioned by Simmel is the stranger's opportunity to leave again (184-188). Sammar always has the option to return to Sudan, which becomes clear when she accepts Rae's offer to visit home, decides to stay in Khartoum and therefore leaves her British life behind: "'I'm not going to have a job to go back to. I'm here today to write my letter of resignation and send it off.'" (152). Drawing upon Simmel's theory, Sammar is the "potential wanderer" (185). She is, although part of Western

society, not as strongly bound to it as its indigenous members. As a stranger she has "the freedom of coming and going" (185).
Even though it is this essay's intention to focus on the inter- and transculturality of the female protagonist, it is interesting that Simmel's idea of the stranger is also relevant to the figure of Rae Isles. When Sammar and Yasmin talk about Rae after visiting him at home, Sammar states: "'Rae is different,' [….] He's sort of familiar, like people from back home'" (Aboulela 2001: 21). His occupation and interests, his knowledge about Islam and his appearance are features that set him apart from a stereotyped image of a Westerner, such as Diane.

Thus, he is, to some extent, a stranger within his own culture. At the same time, he is intensively connected to and enrooted in the British culture and, thus, not an obvious example of Simmel's notion of the stranger. This becomes visible when Sammar is thinking of him on Christmas Day: "Sammar felt separate from him, exiled while he was in his homeland, fasting while he was eating turkey and drinking wine. They lived in worlds divided by simple facts – religion, country of origin, race – data that fills forms" (34). This extract does not only show Rae's attachment to Western culture, it underlines the main character's feeling of being a stranger and not fitting in because of 'simple facts'. Rae can be understood as an example of a transcultural personality who, to some extent, also corresponds with Simmel's model of a stranger.

These facets of being a stranger as defined by Simmel stand in close connection to the notion of home as explored by George and her analysis of the "gap between the realities and the idealizations that have made 'home' such an auratic term" (1999: 1f). Being a stranger and being at home seem to be opposites. However, it is more complex than that. As a stranger, one might refer to a place as home even though it does not include the feeling of being at home. Also for Sammar, home is an ambivalent term. It is closely related to the feeling of belonging and includes

the principle of in- and exclusion, of differentiating between the self and the other. Thus, it can be argued that the notion of home goes far beyond the simple meaning of a place to reside at (George 19f). This can be seen on the example of the novel's main character and her relation to the idea of being at home.

Sammar seems to be constantly longing for this feeling of being at home; she "had not been in a real home for a long time. She lived in a room with nothing on the wall, nothing personal, no photographs, no books; just like a hospital room" (Aboulela 2001: 16). This passage indicates that the protagonist does not feel at home in her apartment and in Scotland in general. She cannot identify herself with the place, which is indicated by the fact that there are no 'personal' belongings of Sammar that would make the room a homely place. As outlined above, the protagonist cannot feel at home, as she does not experience belonging and safety. On the contrary, the depiction of her room as a 'hospital room' highlights her loneliness, isolation and emotional illness. This idiom of the 'hospital room' appears several times throughout the novel and emphasizes the aspect of feeling uncomfortable and strange in the Scottish environment.

While being in Scotland, she often refers to Khartoum and her aunt's place as her home. Sammar seems to feel a deep longing for this place. However, it occurs that her feeling of being at home changes and seems to become mixed up, so that Scotland feels like home sometimes:

> "Home had come here. Its dimly lit streets, its sky and the feel of home had come here and balanced just for her. She saw the sky cloudless with too many stars, imagined the night warm, warmer than indoors. She smelled dust and heard the barking stray dogs among the street's rubble and pot-holes. [….] But this was Scotland and the reality left her dulled, unsure of herself. […] home had never come here before" (Aboulela 2001: 21).

Something has caused Sammar to experience home in Aberdeen where she is a stranger. It becomes more and more obvious that her relation to the idea of home seems to be independent from an actual space. When she recalls her time in Scotland with Tarig, she refers to the 'home' they created (9). Even more significantly, the 'hospital room' becomes a real home for her triggered by her love for Rae and the hope he embodies. For the first time since losing her husband and being alone in Scotland, she is able to shrug off her numbness, escape her shocked state and take her life into her own hands again. Symbolic of that change within the main character are the new curtains that "changed the room, changed the light in it. [….] she realized that they were like the curtains Rae had described to her […] She had unconsciously chosen these colours, the same colours he had talked about" (69). It becomes clear that Sammar's idea of home has not much to do with the actual geographical position, society or culture she finds herself in (Cooper 2008: 51f; Steiner 2008: 8f). Most importantly, Aboulela's heroine seems to find home in the feeling of love; firstly, in her love for Tarig and now in her love for Rae.

These male characters in the protagonist's life enable her to experience the feeling of belonging and of safety – facets that, according to George, characterize the state of being at home. This can be seen clearly when a phone call from Rae puts her in a state of happiness and creates a warm feeling of being at home. Once again, she has an illusion but this time it comes without a clash with reality: "She climbed the stairs into a hallucination in which the world had swung around. Home and the past had come here and balanced just for her" (Aboulela 2001: 41).

Furthermore, this feeling of being at home, which is triggered through her love for Rae, is expressed in the situation when Sammar asks Rae to convert to Islam, so that they can get married. This happens only a day before she is supposed to leave

for Egypt on an assignment. She imagines the different scenarios and their implications for her life: "If he said no, she would walk out on to the snow, an exile she would take with her wherever she went" (127). The metaphor of the 'exile' that she would carry around explains the idea of love as a home again and more clearly than ever before. His rejection of love would set Sammar in a state of ever-lasting homelessness, would turn her into a stranger in every place, just as she experienced it after the loss of her deceased husband. Once more, one can see that the main character's experience of belonging and attachment is almost independent from the place, culture or society in which she finds herself.

Sammar embodies a transcultural personality as described by Welsch. She does not have a strong bond to one culture but contains qualities of both societies she is living in.

She also incorporates the features of Simmel's stranger, as she is close and distant at the same time. Nevertheless, the novel seems to go even further as it redefines home and belonging in psychological terms. It shows Sammar as a global stranger and her feeling of being at home is triggered through inter-personal relationships and belief systems rather than a cultural or geographical situatedness. Only by reassuring herself in terms of being loved, the main character is no longer in search for a home or craving for a place to belong to. When she loves and is being loved, home can be simply everywhere.

This phenomenon becomes even more apparent, in the second part of the novel, which is set in Khartoum. The structure of the novel with its two different sections underlines the clash of cultures, with which the protagonist is confronted. When recalling her childhood memories of going to Africa for the first time, the situation seems to reverse the present context. Spending the first seven years of her life in Scotland, Sudan was a foreign country for her: "Home was a vague place, a jumble of what her mother said.

Home was a grey and white place like in the photographs of her cousins" (Aboulela 2001: 47). Sammar does not have a strong and 'natural' bond to Khartoum at first. Things like the interior decor are "[s]trange for Sammar. She was used to the unobtrusive carpets and wood of London's flats" (49).

Nevertheless, she adapts quickly to the Sudanese culture and soon learns to experience this as her home. Furthermore, it is important that she had her family around. Her memories of that time are strongly shaped by the people she is with such as Tarig, his sister Hanan and mother Mahasen. Sammar's early life forms part of a retrospective narrative and underlines the ways in which Sammar's idea of home is, from the beginning, not connected to a place.

The protagonist's relation to Sudanese culture seems to be somewhat ambivalent. This leads again to Simmel's notion of the stranger. To begin with, Sammar experiences a nearness to the Sudanese culture. As mentioned before, she has a deep longing and a feeling of homesickness for Khartoum while she is in Scotland. When Sammar is back in Sudan, surrounded by her family, in the warm climate she was missing so badly, it seems, at first, as if her longing and desire for being at home is fulfilled. The protagonist herself feels that her "homesickness was cured" (146). This clearly indicates that Sammar feels a deep pleasure about being back in Khartoum; that she feels at home at this place and in this culture. This can also be seen in another scene. There the process of adapting to the Sudanese environment is described in physical terms, laying a focus on her body and bodily changes.

> "Sammar sat on the porch and there was no breeze, no moisture in the air, all was heat, dryness, desert dust. Her bones were content with that, supple again, young. They had forgotten how they used to be clenched. Her skin too had darkened from the sun, cleared and forgotten wool and gloves. She waited for everything else to forget: the inside of her and her eyes. Her eyes had let her down, they were not as strong as they had been in the past, not as strong as the eyes of those who had not travelled north" (Aboulela 2001: 138).

This passage outlines clearly that Sammar experiences ambivalence. Again, the weather is an important symbol and indicator of her situation. The climate descriptions contrast the difference between cold and snowy Europe and the hot, dry desert of Africa in drastic terms. Additionally, Sammar's physical adaptation to the climate dominates this extract. The personification of different body parts is used to describe her mood. For example, 'her bones' are pleased by the warmth and have 'forgotten' the cold and 'her skin' is darker and has 'forgotten' about the warm clothing needed in the rough Scottish winter. This shows her re-adaptation to Sudanese culture. Furthermore, it underlines that she is feeling comfortable. Finally, Sammar seems to be at the place she was longing for and shows Simmel's notion of the stranger's proximity.

However, this scene also illustrates that the different life she was living in Aberdeen has influenced her a lot. Thus, it also shows Simmel's second component of being a stranger – the feature of distance. It can be seen that Sammar is in the process of familiarizing herself with her new home and tries to leave the Scottish life behind as 'she waited for everything else to forget'. This becomes even clearer when we look at the personification of 'her eyes' that 'let her down' and are not as good as the eyes of those who have not travelled to Europe. Because of her experience of living in another culture, Sammar differs from other people in her hometown. 'Her eyes' that have lost their strength show a bodily transformation and symbolise a change in her personality, an imprint that is left behind from her life in Scotland. She is not exactly the same Sammar she has been before living in Aberdeen. Somehow, she is a changed person, not only physically but also personally. Her aunt points this out to her in quite drastic terms when she says: "'In the past you were lively and strong, now you've just become an idiot'" (172).

It is necessary to consider that the relation between the two women is very tense because of the death of Mahasen's son. That plays an important role in this scene as Mahasen blames the heroine for Tarig's death. Nevertheless, this extract also shows that Sammar is more distanced from her family and the Sudanese culture in general. She "brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it" (Simmel 185) and therefore shows the characteristics of a stranger in her home country.

However, it is not only Sammar herself who has gone through a change, which leads to the experience of foreignness. It is also her hometown that is no longer the same. Thus, it is not as familiar to the heroine as it used to be. One example of that is her memory of sleeping on the roof under a beautiful sky, a memory that made her homesick for Khartoum while she was in Aberdeen. Now that she is back, she is confronted with the reality that things have changed. "Hanan had built her flat on the roof. 'No one, Sammar,' she said, 'sleeps outdoors anymore'" (146). When meeting her brother, Waleed, she comes to a similar realisation. Waleed confronts her with this, when they talk about memories of the past and their habit to watch movies at the cinema. "'Things change. You want to go away and come back and find everything the same?'" (150).

He outlines that the town, people's habits, the culture itself have developed in Sammar's absence. Thus, even in Sudan, Sammar is like Simmel's stranger. However, Sammar's situation in Sudan is not comparable with the alienation she has felt in Aberdeen. Sammar is not a complete stranger to Sudanese culture, the climate and her relatives but, at the same time she has to face the changes that have taken place within herself, her family and within the society. The time that she spent in Scotland has distanced her, to some degree, from her home culture and turns her into a global stranger.

Another important aspect is that Sammer "retains the freedom of coming and going" (Rogers 1999: 61), which is also typical for Simmel's stranger. It is even expected from her to leave again. Aunt Mahasen makes this clear to Sammar in a for the protagonist hurtful conversation: "'You should go back to England, work there and send us things'" (Aboulela 2001 172). Her brother also expresses the belief that Sammar should and will return to Europe. "'I'll give you a couple more weeks,' he said, 'you'll take Amir and run back.' [....] 'Of course you have to go back to your job in Aberdeen'" (153ff). These aspects show Sammar's remoteness from her family and the life in Sudan. These paragraphs indicate that she carries the characteristics of the stranger not only in the British, but also in the Sudanese culture.

It seems as if Sammar's situation in Khartoum and her own emotions about it are ambivalent, which leads again to the notion of home as explored above. On the one hand, she does experience belonging; she fits into the society and circumstances around her. She also feels content and can finally be at the place she was longing for. She enjoys being close to her family and friends, and especially the bond to her son, Amir, grows strong again. On the other hand, it becomes clear that even within Sudanese culture she has some of the features of Simmel's prototype of a stranger. She does not seem to be able to adapt fully to the situation and the reason for that is Rae. She seems to be overburdened in a lot of situations. "She poured sour milk in her aunt's tea and had to make another cup. She sent Amir to school without making him brush his teeth, left the fan running in the empty bedroom all morning. At work she felt that she didn't care, it didn't matter at all that her adult students could barely read and write" (169).

As much as she enjoys being back in the environment and culture she was longing for so badly, it is hard to forget Rae. When she has overcome her yearning for Khartoum and is back in the

place she has called her home, she develops a longing to be back in Aberdeen and close to Rae. "[S]he dreamt of him. [....] And Sammar found herself nostalgic for her old job, the work itself [...] She missed Diane, the smell of her cheese and onion crisps [...] This was the exile from him then. Never hearing his name. Living in a place where no one knew him" (166f). This passage indicates the main character's longing for her Scottish life and Rae, as all the things she is missing stand in connection to him. Ironically, one aspect that has marked one of the biggest cultural differences is now something that she is thinking of and longing for – Diane and the smell of her chips. At the same time that she feels at home in her culture and her familiar place, she feels 'exiled' from Rae and her home that she has found in love. Her thoughts and especially her dreams about him are the reason why she acts ineffectively and seems overstrained. "She kept busy so that there would not be pauses in the day to dwell. She tired herself so that there would not be dreams at night" (163). She feels the need to exhaust herself to concentrate on other things apart from thinking about him.

The feeling of missing Rae, of being expelled from the home she has found in him, causes a corporeal pain. It was "[o]nly a dream and it could induce nausea in her, a dry soreness behind her eyes" (169). This is underlined further by the fact that she is not able to talk to anyone about him, worries about the reactions of friends and family and, thus, becomes alienated from them even further (167f). Sammar herself identifies this problem in the last conversation with Rae before leaving Aberdeen: "'I was homesick for the place, how everything looked. But I don't know what kind of sickness it would be, to be away from you'" (128). Even though Aboulela's heroine identifies with Khartoum as a place more than with Aberdeen and feels much closer to the Sudanese culture than the British customs, she has a deep longing for Rae who conveys home for Sammar through love.

As described earlier in this essay, her affection for the Scottish professor is very important for the protagonist to develop the feeling of belonging and of being at home. Sammar, as a global stranger, is unable to belong fully to a place or culture if the main trigger of feeling at home is missing – if she is exiled from love.

"Aboulela distinguishes quite clearly between the longing for a geographical place and a spiritual home" (Steiner 2008: 16). This suggests that the feeling of being at home, of belonging and being a stranger are not only influenced by culture narrowly defined. In a more and more globalized world, in which intercultural encounters are a daily phenomenon and societies are seen as transcultural structures, the individual seems to be at the centre of attention. As mentioned in the introduction to this essay, formerly safe categories become more and more blurred and lose their clear shape. Home seems to be becoming a psychological place, belonging can be experienced in the most alien environment and one can turn into a stranger even towards one's own family.

Religion and the Comfort of Strangers: "The World as one Cohesive Place"

One aspect that should also be considered, when analysing Aboulela's novel, is the role of religion. Islam shapes Sammar's belief and behavioural patterns; it is decisive for her emotions and actions, which is outlined by Steiner in her essay on "Strategic nostalgia, Islam and cultural translation" (2008) in Aboulela's writing. It seems difficult to put religion in its proper place as it is often excluded in theoretical approaches regarding trans- or interculturality.

However, it is not possible to overlook the importance of religion in Aboulela's text. The novel presents the idea of religion as a transcendent and central determinant of behaviour, of thinking and emotions, at least for its Muslim heroine. Aboulela's writings

"demonstrate over and over again that prayer, faith rituals, association with the community of believers and studying the Qur'an and the Hadiths are possible in whichever geographical location her characters find themselves" (Steiner 2008: 13). This aspect underlines that Sammar is driven and shaped by her faith as a Muslim.

Furthermore, it could be argued that religion is not only a part of the protagonist's culture; it is culture itself. For Aboulela there is no culture outside of religion:

> "In an interview, Aboulela stated that she wants to communicate in her fiction not merely the intellectual knowledge of Islam, 'but also the psychology, state of mind and emotions or a person who has faith'. She is 'interested in going deep, not just looking at 'Muslim' as a cultural or political identity but something close to the centre'" (Cooper 2008: 52).

The protagonist of the novel does not seem to have a strong bond to one specific culture. Even though she considers Sudan as her home and its culture as her home culture, she experiences alienation and has problems in re-adapting completely. She is looking for a home in love and finds it, independent of place, society and culture. According to this understanding of home, it becomes clear that religion is another home for Aboulela's protagonist; it gives her a feeling of security and normality, of belonging and inclusion independent from a place or culture she finds herself in.

> "Nostalgia therefore does not always enable the characters to form sound judgements of their new environment or even of their real homes in the source culture, as the longing for and dreaming of home sometimes covers reality with a golden patina. Aboulela is aware of this particular danger of nostalgic fantasy. For this reason, she allows her character a return to her home in Khartoum, where suddenly nothing is quite as fulfilling as imagined. And this is also the point at which Aboulela foregrounds the transnationality and universality of Islam" (Steiner 2008: 14).

Sammar experiences "[d]ays in which the only thing she could rouse herself to do was pray the five prayers. They were the only challenge, the last touch with normality, without them she would have fallen, lost awareness of the shift of day and night" (Aboulela 2001: 16). After the loss of her husband, the novel's main character seems to be exiled from love. In those difficult days, the only thing that gives her stability and offers her a home is her religion.

Additionally, she experiences a foreign country and its alien lifestyle; alien because it does not include Islam. Even though it is not always shown explicitly that the lack of Muslim religion in Scotland is the reason for her experience of alienation, it is indicated in most situations. In connection with her habit of praying, in particular, it becomes visible that religion is an important determinant for the feeling of being a stranger in the Western world:

> "It had seemed strange for her when she first came to live here, all that privacy that surrounded praying. She was used to praying in the middle of parties, in places where others chatted, slept or read. However, she was aware now, after having lived in this city for many years she could understand, how surprised people would be were they to turn the corner of a building and find someone with their forehead, nose and palms touching the ground" (76)
>
> "Time to pray and the sadness that there was nowhere to pray in the airport, if she stood up and prayed in the corner, people would have a fit. A story once told by Yasmin: Turks in London praying in Terminal 1 and someone called the police (133)."

These two passages indicate that religion plays a major role in the protagonist's alienation from Scottish society and culture. Furthermore, it becomes obvious that it is a situation where the feeling of being a stranger develops from both perspectives – the inside and the outside. On the one hand, it is strange for her that Islam is not part of British culture and she feels distanced from Western society. On the other hand, she is regarded as a stranger

by others because of her religious practices as the example of praying in the airport shows. People seem to be offended by her belief and stigmatize her as a foreigner. This dual process of being a stranger becomes clear, in particular, with regards to the aspect of religion. It is Aboulela's main character herself who experiences the cultural differences and feels like a stranger. Only in a few situations is she the one who gets isolated by others – and these situations seem to revolve around her relation to Islam.

It is clear that religion functions as a determinant in Sammar's life and is, thus, also decisive for her experience of foreignness. This becomes clear when regarding her relation to Diane again. Diane's reaction, for example, to the news that Rae is in hospital does not follow Sammar's behavioural pattern in any way. On the contrary, the main character interprets Diane's response to the news as rude and painful. It can be seen that "[t]he style that Sammar would have appreciated is the Muslim comforting phrase that is evoked at such a time and which provides words as bulwarks against life's hurts" (Cooper 2008: 47). Thus, it is a cultural difference between the two female figures that is shaped by religious beliefs. One could carry on and point out that the ham on Diane's sandwich, as a forbidden food for Muslims, underlines this distance even further (47f). Consequently, it can be seen that a lot of details that make Sammar appear as Simmel's kind of stranger point back to her faith. It influences her way of interacting with others and, in the end, is more important than her love for Rae.

The aspect that her religious belief is stronger than her love for Rae underlines, again Sammar's position as a stranger. Once more, there is a correlation with Simmel's theory as the protagonist incorporates "freedom" (185) and "mobility" (186), which she finds in Islam. Because of her faith, she is Simmel's 'wanderer' and leaves Rae as well as the British culture behind.

The main character's bond to religion is stronger than her love for Rae and she is not able to sacrifice her religion for him.

Consequently, it seems as if religion is the only home for Sammar, a home that she cannot be exiled from as she carries her faith deep inside. Aboulela depicts a "transnational vision of Islam, which is not bound to a particular location and which accommodates movement and change" (Steiner 2008: 8). When reciting her prayers "the certainty of the words brought unexpected tears, something deeper than happiness, all the splinters inside her coming together" (Aboulela 2001: 75). A symbol for her belief, in material terms, is her prayer mat that seems to go with her wherever she goes.

In a way, we can see that Islam is an important aspect for Sammar's feeling of belonging to Sudan:

> "[S]he heard from a distance the sunset azan. She had missed it in Aberdeen, felt its absence, sometimes fancied she heard it in the rumble of the central-heating pipes, in a sound coming from a neighbouring flat. It now came as a relief, the reminder that there was something bigger than all this, above everything" (145).

Again, this passage shows how religion shapes the protagonist's experience of alienation or belonging. It is the aspect of a shared religious belief in the Sudanese culture that seems to bring her closer to it. Thus, the novel shows that religion, just as well as love, offers Sammar a home independent of place, society or culture (Steiner 2001: 7-16). In Scotland, even though it stands for the Western world and the Christian belief pattern, she feels surrounded by Islam. She experiences that "[h]ere in Scotland she was learning more about her own religion, the world was one cohesive place" (Aboulela 2001: 109). This underlines that her religion offers her a feeling of safety and inclusion wherever she is. Furthermore, this extract of the novel brings Welsch's concept of transculturality back to mind. Sammar experiences with regards to

her religion what he develops within his theory, namely, that 'the world is one cohesive place' and boundaries between cultures become more and more insubstantial.

Moreover, Brendan Smyth' and Sadia Abbas' readings of the novel suggest that Rae plays an important role for Sammar's relation to Islam:

> "Several times, Sammar remarks that Rae teaches her things about Islam that she doesn't know" (Smyth 2007: 172). "She translates Arabic texts for Rae, and the novel implies that she translates Islam into a properly *felt* system of beliefs for him. [….] The novel's more striking suggestion is that he translates Islam back to her, that she learns more about Islam from him than she did in Sudan" (Abbas 2011: 437).

This understanding gains even more importance when regarding the end of the novel. In a way, Rae is a trigger for Sammar to re-think her relation to religion, to him and to herself. Suddenly, the protagonist realises that her own behaviour has not served her religious belief:

> "There were people who drew others to Islam. People with deep faith, the type who slept little at night, had an energy in them. [....] Someone influencing someone, with no ego involved. And she, when she spoke to Rae, wanting this and that, full of it; [...] She had never, not once, prayed that he would become a Muslim for his own sake, for his own good. It had always been for herself, her need to get married again, not be alone" (Aboulela 2001: 179).

Only after being aware of this, the novel can end with a feeling of contentment. Rae converts to Islam and takes Sammar back to Aberdeen, where she can now fully feel at home – in his love and their shared faith. After all, the home that Sammar finds in his love can only be reached through the home that both of them discover in religion. They are both global strangers and transcultural individuals, who need one another to achieve a greater self-realisation: Sammar enables Rae to come to a

confession not only of his belief in Islam but also of his love for her. Rae, however, is able to encourage Sammar to re-define her relation to Islam and her motives for love.

In *The Translator*, the Sudanese author explores concepts of belonging, the feeling of alienation, of being a global stranger and of experiencing home in faith and in love. Aboulela embeds the idea of a transcultural globalized world, in which the concept of culture needs to be reassessed and rewritten. The idea of cultures as closed entities does not seem appropriate any longer, which is underlined by the novel's insightful and detailed descriptions of both the Sudanese and Scottish culture. The main characters, Sammar and Rae, are perfect examples of these culturally hybrid, transcultural individuals. With this novel, Aboulela gives a touching and realistic inside into the life and difficulties of a Muslim migrant woman who faces the challenges of interculturality by living between African Muslim Sudan and Western secular Scotland.

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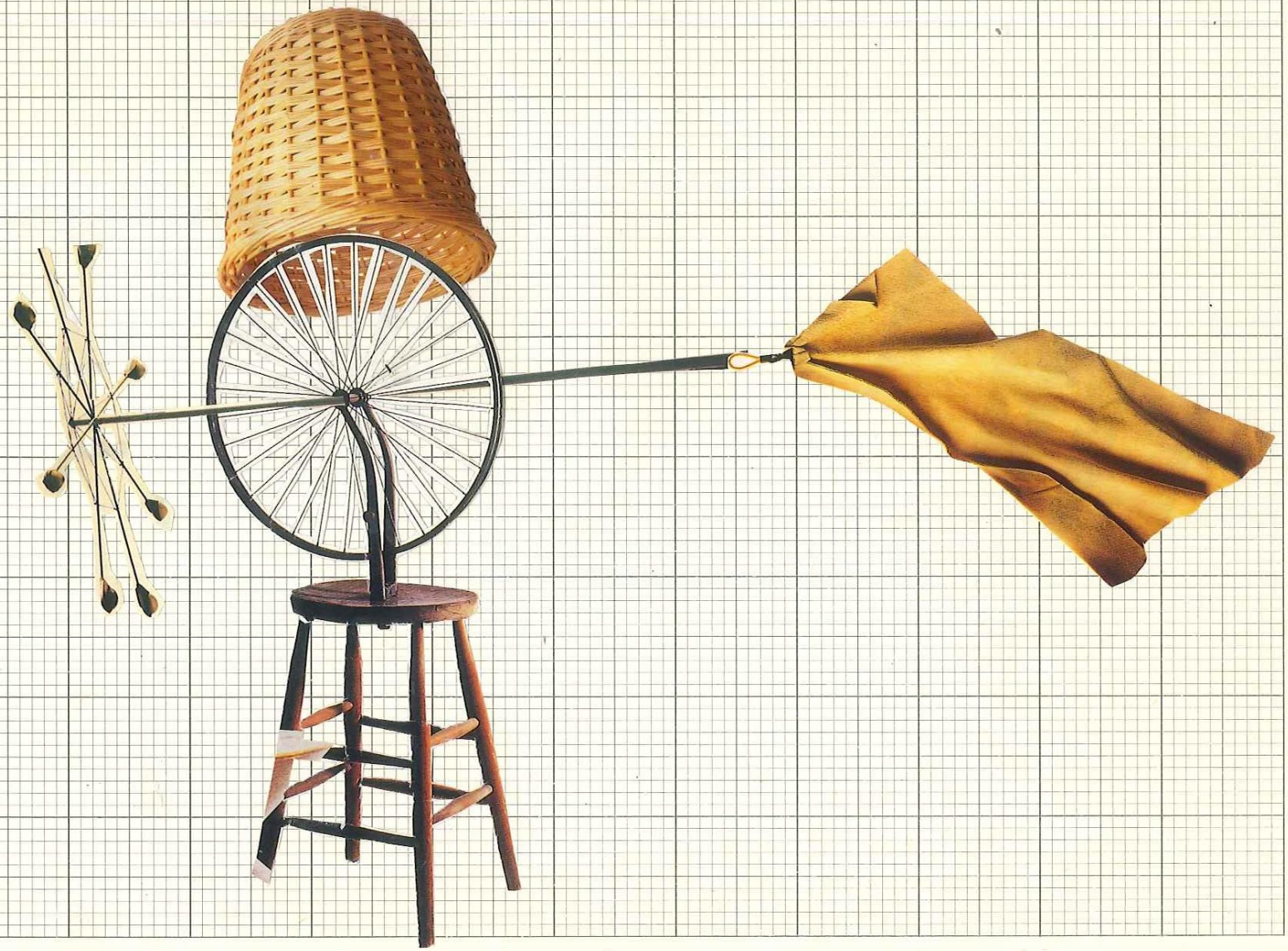
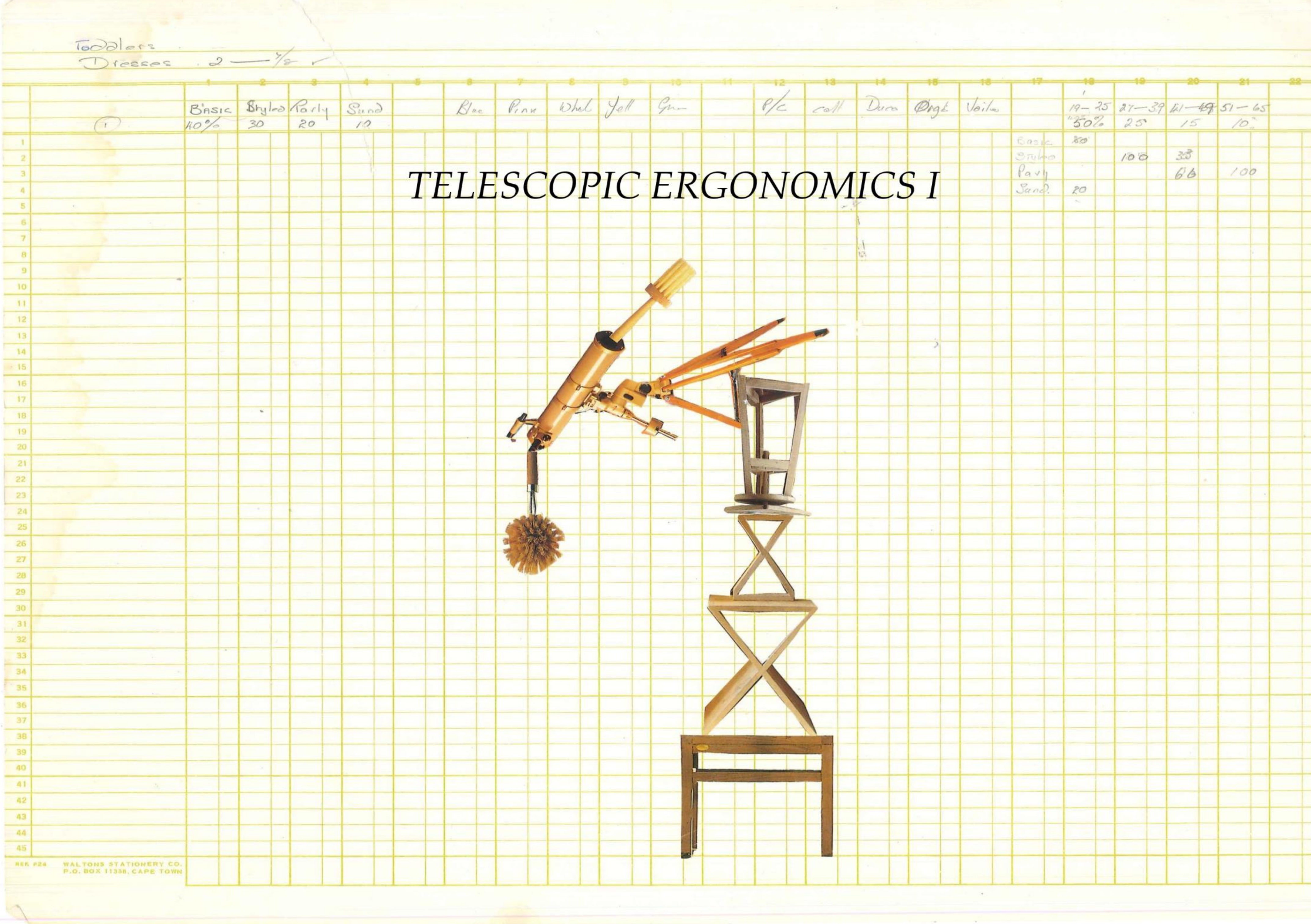
- Luisa Rath

ART

"Imagination: visible-invisibility" - Julia Kabat

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE I





TELESCOPIC ERGONOMICS I
Toddlers
Dresses 2 — 4/8
Basic 40%
Styled 30
Party 20
Sund 10
Blue
Pink
Whit
Yell
Grn
P/C
coll
Dura
Orgt
Voile
19–25 50%
27–39 25
41–49 15
51–65 10
Basic 80
Styled 100 33
Party 66 100
Sand 20
WALTONS STATIONERY CO.
P.O. BOX 11338, CAPE TOWN

THE OUTDOOR WEATHER PAINTER I

Collage Labels:

Domestic Bliss: Light up your life I, Telescopic Ergonomics I, The Outdoor Weather Painter I.

The schematic symbolisation of the graph paper used in the collages denotes a space for creation and construction. The symbolic schematical function has been harnessed in these collages through their function as preliminary "sketches" for the construction of their three dimensional counterparts. Here images of ordinary objects, for everyday use, are reconsidered, combined, and assigned an imaginative function, culminating in the construction of a fantastical contraption. The selection of certain images, such as the wheel and the movement of the cloth, serve as a type of 'sail' in *Domestic Bliss: Light Up Your Life,* and suggests the mechanical function of these imaginative constructions.

Artist Marcel Duchamp declared that beauty was the imagining of gestures, and that "playing a game", was like "designing something or constructing a mechanism", (Moure 30). As the artist, I am playing a game with the viewer in assigning them the task of decoding these ordinary objects which have been 'concealed' through their imaginative combinations. Latour (10) sheds light on the interdependent relationship which these constructions set up, in stating that, "Things do not exist without being full of people". This dialect consists of the subject- object, where the subject has the ability to transfer, circulate and displace the necessity of the object. The interdependency resides in the necessity of the viewer's engagement, breathing life into the imaginative function of these constructions. In our technological age and with a constant visual overload, one too easily becomes a passive viewer.

The purpose of these fantastical contraptions is to transform and challenge the way in which people 'see'. It is significant that these images were all sourced from old discarded magazines, where images of utilitarian objects can be found and have since been decontextualized and recontextualized as artworks.

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Interview

"'Writing found me' - a conversation with Jolyn Philips"

I met Jolyn Philips (JP) in an office filled with books, colourful rugs and little painted guinea fowls handcrafted out of pinecones. With a cup of tea at hand, Jolyn and I spoke about her childhood in the fishing town of Gaansbaai. We spoke about what it was like to leave her beloved hometown and move to Cape Town – a place she had never been to, a place filled with mystery and excitement as she left home to pursue her dream. Jolyn registered at The University of the Western Cape (UWC) and now, many years later, she is one of UWC's many success stories having just published her first book, a collection of short stories titled, *TjiengTjangTjerries*.

Author Jolyn Philips proudly holding her newly launched book

Jolyn does not like to call herself an author; the term makes her feel uncomfortable. It was her supervisor, she says, who saw something in her that she, herself, could not understand. As Jolyn speaks, it is as if a light is shining within her and I see what her supervisor is talking about. When she speaks about writing, her entire face and demeanour changes and she emanates calmness and maturity. Jolyn never saw herself as a writer. She was just a young girl from Gaansbaai who had big dreams but never thought they would turn into reality.

Jolyn, a 2014 Mandela Rhodes scholar, is not just a writer, she is a singer too. She often sings at UWC graduations and this year the

newly-appointed rector, Tyron Pretorius gave her multiple shout outs, cementing his admiration for the singer. As Jolyn sang renditions of 'I Dreamed a Dream' from *Les Misérables* and 'There's a Place for Us' from *West Side Story,* the crowds watched and listened in silence to her powerful voice as it harmonized perfectly with the joyous celebration.

When Jolyn speaks about home, her body language changes – home has a special meaning for her. It grounds her; even though, when she was studying at UWC, she could only afford to go home once or twice a year. Money was extremely tight and as much as Jolyn missed her parents she had to stay at university. It was this longing for home that inspired her book - she missed home so much that she began to write about it and so *TjiengTjangTjerries* was born.

KN: How did you write this book? Talk to me about the characters.

JP: I joined Meg's (Meg van der Merwe) creative writing group when I was in my third year of my BA degree and so my writing journey began. I had to interview someone from home, and there was this sort of disconnect with me and the people at home. So when I couldn't go home I started to imagine home, I started to miss it. I started writing about it, about the place and the people. I would sometimes go to places where there was sea, somewhere that felt like home and I felt that I belonged. This wasn't my place, but I write from that truth, I didn't belong here. There was a disconnect. I wasn't the person I was when I left. The characters really wrote themselves; I came with all the memories. I was being taught fiction at the time so that also shaped my writing. I was invested (in this character), I gave it clothes, a name, history and realised that the part that was missing was the character's story. It took me a long time to figure it out, it took me about 4 years to discover the character, but I eventually did. I just hope that I did not become the 'outsider' by writing about the 'inside'.

Jolyn talking about the characters in her book

KN: How has your upbringing in Gaansbaai influenced your writing?

JP: I had a wonderful childhood; I have a lot of mothers and fathers! You grow up with a lot of people around you. I think that childhood is still within me, because I had such a wonderful imagination, I remember my dad coming home from the factory at 5 and playing games like *skopbokkie* or *tol*. I remember that parts, or maybe I'm just being nostalgic, and we played hide and seek and safety was not an issue. I grew up with such a lush environment: trees and the sea. I only realised I missed those thing when I came up to Cape Town. I grew up completely Afrikaans. I went to a high school in Genadendal and, you know, you go through things at high school. It was the first time I engaged with language, art and singing. I actually almost failed matric and my teacher supported me. I did well, I passed and applied for journalism; writing was already seeping through. I was always a hard worker; I had to pay my own school fees. My mom is a storyteller, a strong woman. I had to find out her history. My mom

and dad grew up as orphans so they did not know their parents; it wasn't something we ever spoke about. So I had to dig and do research – this influenced my writing process.

KN: You speak a lot about 'home' and I can see that it means a lot to you. Do you have a sense of home when you come here (UWC)?

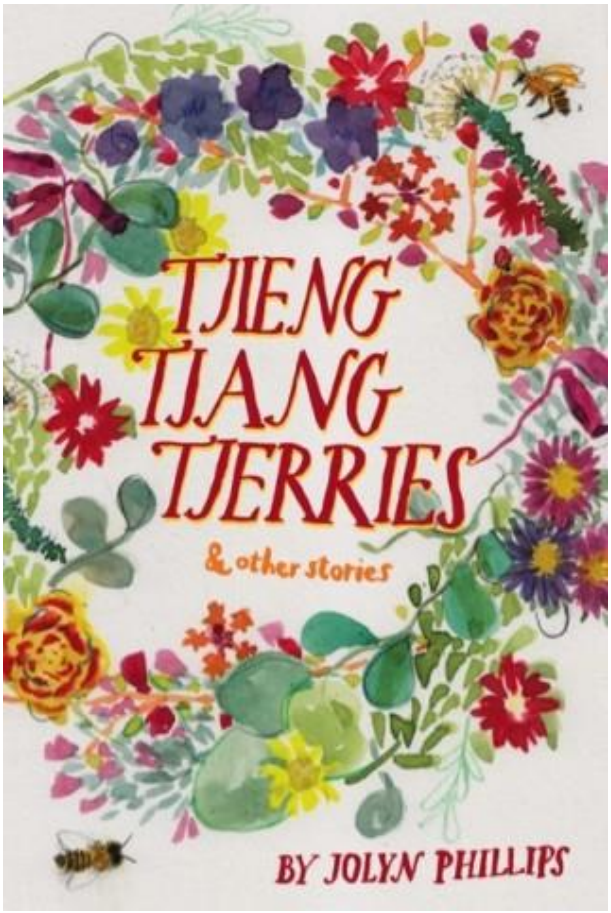
JP: I do, it gives me sense of purpose and belonging, if all else fails in Cape Town I know I can come here [to UWC]; the people know me here and they are kind to me. There have been so many people here at UWC who shaped me, besides my supervisor Meg van der Merwe. Mrs Roos (one of the English department secretaries) was one of my first mentors and she taught me "treat other people as you would yourself" and I've taken that with me, she was one of the beginning people. She saw that I was looking for work and empowered me, she gave me work and she refused for me to feel sorry for myself. She always said "Jolyn, wear what you want" and so my journey here began and now I am who I'm supposed to be. Mentors, teachers, and opportunities were given to me and there must be a reason why I am still here; I've found a home here.

Jolyn speaking about UWC and home

KN: How did you feel when the book was published, when you held the first copy?

JP: Meg actually held the first copy. The cover artist, Carla Kreuser, would send me little colours, and ideas and she took these ideas and came up with this (pictured below), she drew from the stories – I did not realise how much of the landscape was in this book. We're not just fish, sea and people. We are quite famous for our fynbos;

it really shaped a lot of the characters' memories, too. Fynbos is always around. The fynbos can situate you in a place, and if you smell a certain type then you know you are in a certain part of Gaansbaai. Like if you see and smell a protea, they just don't grow just anywhere! When I go home I switch off completely! I just make no sense. I can't speak. They just know I like being home, there's nothing quite like 'home' to bring you back to your senses and remind you who you are and how far you've come, it humbles you.



The cover of TjiengTjangTjerries

The book was chosen to be on a list called the 'Home Brew' at Exclusive Books, I'll be going to Johannesburg for the Home Brew festival. I will be going to the Franschhoek Literary Festival, where my publishers found me last year. I'll be attending the McGregor festival, the open book festival but what I'm most excited about is taking the book home! My cousin told me that someone wrote a feature about me in *Die Son* and I thought that was the best way to introduce me to the people at home – but I'm very excited about the home launch.

KN: What are you working on at the moment?

JP: I am currently working on my PhD in the Education faculty. I'm doing language learning because I feel that story telling has had

such a huge impact on my learning and development and has gotten me to this place, not just success but for me, as a person. If I can come up with something that can be used by other teachers to teach those learners what I've learned, I want to change people's lives through that process. I would also (for my own selfish reasons) love to travel and see the word at least once and actually get on a plane… for the first time!

KN: What advice do you have for any aspiring creative writers?

JP: If you want to write, just write. I read somewhere that 'for the cheapest form of art all you need is a pen and paper' – while this is true, writing is time consuming; you'll feel like an exhausted mother after nightshift with her new born. You will be anxious, worried and your writing goes through the terrible twos – if you have experienced this and or felt like this then you are on the right path.

Writing came at a time of healing; looking back, if I could sketch myself, it was as if my skin was coming apart, the words hung loose from my body until I could face the truth and pick up the words. Those words possessed everything that kept me from being present and from being able to forgive and make new possibilities out of them. And finally, don't force yourself to write in a specific form; write short stories novels or poems, just write your truth and your stories will mould itself into the shape it needs to be.

For more information on *TjiengTjangTjerries and other stories* 2016 visit http://www.modjajibooks.co.za/titles/tjieng-tjang-tjerries-and-other-stories/ and to purchase the book visit Excusive Books.

Interviewer: Kareesha Naidoo

Interview Photography: Nehna Singh

Editors: Zuleika Shaik and Martina van Heerden

Articles

My Shakespeare Celebration

William Shakespeare's contribution to the English language and literature remains invaluable. As an artist, he is simultaneously celebrated, revered and, in the case of first year students, feared for the ways in which he crafted plays and poems. His legacy is as far-reaching as his influence on the English language – from essentially providing the blueprint for all romantic comedy movies to allowing such wonderful modern creations as *Shakespeare's Star Wars* to exist (Artoo Detoo booping and beeping in iambic pentameter!).

Although, Shakespeare is arguably one of the most recognised names in literature, we actually know very little about Shakespeare, the man. For instance, each of the six surviving instances of this signature are completely different, resulting in at least six different ways of spelling his name (none of which is the same as the spelling we use), his birthdate is contested, and aside from a couple of specific, and recorded, dates, we know nothing about what he spent his days doing.

Perhaps it is this air of mystery that adds to our continued fascination with Shakespeare, and on Wednesday, 20 March 2016, the English Department seminar held a celebration of the 400th anniversary of what is considered to be Shakespeare's birth date. The celebration, entitled My Shakespeare, encouraged students and lecturers to reflect on what Shakespeare means for them. Below are a couple of pieces from the collaborative seminar.

Fallen Stars

Our stars uncrossed

The floor unpurpled

Blood returned to wounds,

From dawn to night to gloaming light

Grow bright to sun unset.

Render us as dreams remade,

As hearts still to bleed,

Before our fall to deepest lost

Give us one moment freed.

I was inspired by the visual connotations of the words *star-crossed* (*Romeo and Juliet*) and *purpled* (stained with blood, *Julius Caesar*). *Star-crossed* evokes the image of celestial paths thrown into disarray by an immense and irreversible force – a powerful representation of fate. The colour purple is regal, suggesting the nobility of Caesar's blood as it stains Brutus's hands. The line "We are such stuff as dreams are made on" (*The Tempest*) also finds its way into the poem, merely because stars made me think of dreams. The poem is an imagining of tragedy reversed.

Iona Gilburt

My Shakespeare

High school was a crucial time in my life. I was introduced to Shakespeare. While my classmates regarded his work as tedious and irrelevant, secretly I was falling in love. *Romeo and Juliet* was our set-work for the year and I could barely contain my excitement. Act III, Scene 2 was read by my teacher.

“Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night; Give me my Romeo, and, when I shall die, Take him and cut him out in little stars, And he will make the face of heaven so fine That all the world will be in love with night…”

I took a deep breath, allowing these words to seep into my soul. I opened my eyes to a remarkable sight. Not only the girls, but the *boys* in my class were fainting and falling off their chairs upon hearing this. They thereafter asked my teacher’s advice on how to approach girls using the words of Shakespeare. From thereon, all of my classmates were passionate about Shakespeare and regarded his work with the highest esteem. I sat there with a smile on my face, and Shakespeare in my heart.

Micayla Vellai

My Shakespeare

When I was eight years old (or thereabouts) my father called me to his room one day and presented me with a leather-bound copy of the complete works of Shakespeare and a book on Roman and Greek mythology and duly instructed me to read them. We lived in a Karoo town, Beaufort-West at the time. I recall mildly objecting since my preferred reading matter was comics: Superman, the Amazing Spider man and of course more 'classical' comics like Prince Valiant. His response was to tear up my supply of comics except for Prince Valiant, in which, he said, the English was half decent.

It did not end there. During the school holidays when I visited home he'd often get the whole family to do *King Lear* or perhaps *Othello*. We'd read from the scripts which accompanied his series of Shakespearean LPs (vinyl). I developed a deep and abiding resentment for all things Shakespearean since, as a young boy, all I wanted to do during the school holidays was play outside with my friends.

However, in Standard 8 (Grade 10), I encountered Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* which for some reason changed my mind about Shakespeare. Who can forget those memorable lines spoken by Shylock: "How like a fawning publican he looks. I hate him for he is a Christian...If I can catch him once on the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him" (Act I, Scene III). And what of the immortal lines spoken by Portia: "The quality of mercy is not strained, It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven... It is enthroned in the heart of kings, It is an attribute to God himself..." (Act IV, Scene I).

That point marked the beginning of a love-affair which has lasted a lifetime.

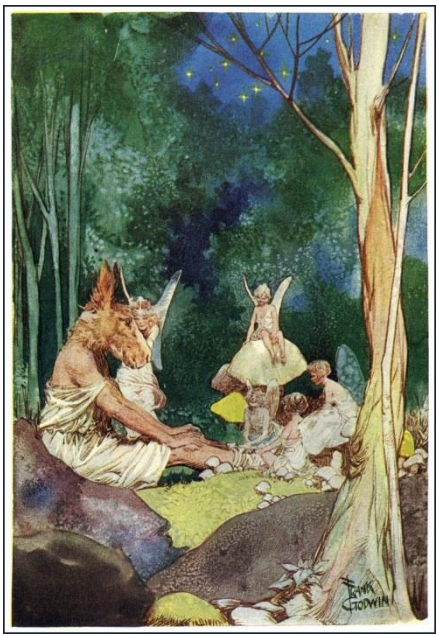
Llewellin RG Jegels

My Shakespeare

I cannot recall my first encounter with Shakespeare but it must have been in the idioms and expressions of the language in which I was raised and through which the world was mediated. I must have read his stories and seen his picture in the pages of *Look and Learn Magazine* from the age of 7, when I began to read on my own. But I can clearly remember being spellbound by the stories and pictures of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, which I read and read again, sitting high in the branches of a jacaranda tree or, on misty, wet days, lying under the gramophone in the living room as I listened to Beatles' records, lent to me soon after they came out by the older boys next door; they were English and different from the other children in the area. I was especially struck by the illustration in the Lamb book of *A*

Midnight Summer Night's Dream, a green and enchanted world not unlike, it seemed to me then, the one through which my friends and I roamed in the holidays. Our adventures took us into the indigenous forest of the Kloof gorge or through the sprawling three acre gardens of the suburb, which ran into the surrounding bush. I was thrilled, then, when given the role of a tree in the same play at school. It was a minor part, I thought, but I was 9 and didn't mind. The older children in the school had the major roles. My time would come, I reasoned. Only now, with the benefit of ecocritical hindsight, do I realise that I had the most important part after all.

The rehearsals went well. I had ample time to savour the best



parts of the play, the scenes set in the woods, from a vantage point on stage. I didn't have to worry about missing cues or getting words wrong. The opening night arrived. Everyone put on their costumes. I was wrapped in yards and yards of cloth, painted with images of bark and foliage. I stood on stage as upright and still as any forest tree. This wasn't a cool English glade, but humid Natal. I grew hotter and hotter as the scenes unfolded; the events in the play became even more fantastical than usual. A man in the audience shouted "timber" as I fell. But I didn't hear him.

I regained consciousness back stage surrounded by teachers and my mother, a nurse. I was mortified. I wanted to resume my place on stage but they wouldn't let me. I didn't know at the time that my "swoon" would have been suited to numerous Shakespearean roles. I was never offered one of these, although I did go on to star in *A Christmas Tale* and *A Man for All Seasons*.

The Beatles broke up only a few years after our production of *A Midnight Summer Night's Dream*. Most of the wild areas of Kloof had been developed by then too. The gardens through which we roamed were enclosed by walls and fences. The neighbouring English boys had become anti-apartheid activists. One had had to leave South Africa in a hurry. Watching *Mbabatha*, the Zulu *Macbeth* in Johannesburg, was the most significant moment of my adolescent experience of William Shakespeare, I think. It was the first time in twenty years that a white audience had been allowed to watch black actors. And it was clear who Macbeth was.

Michael Wessels

"If music be the food of love, play on" William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

Shakespeare, for me, changes the way novels, plays and all literary texts are read. Shakespeare is an experience and once you have experienced a Shakespeare play or sonnet, other literature looks different, reads differently and life itself is different.

Last year I was fortunate to go to England and I visited Shakespeare's home, Stratford-Upon-Avon. It was like walking through history, stepping into a different time period. The place itself told its own story; all I had to do was write.

I went into the house that Shakespeare grew up. All the beds in his house were smaller than our beds and are too small to lie down in. The story is that apparently, people in that time did not want to sleep lying down but rather in an upright position because they felt that when you die you will be lying forever. They did not want to sleep in the same position that you are in when you die. After walking through Shakespeare's house, we were met, outside in the garden, by three actors reciting snippets from different Shakespeare plays.

The people watching could call out a scene from any play and they would recite a few lines from it.

Shakespeare is alive always, through his writing and every time his plays are performed. Shakespeare breathes life into words and gives words a whole new meaning.

Thandi Bosman

Editor: Martina van Heerden

This is how it was (Victor Dlamini, Javier Perez and Sindiwe Magona)

So. How was the Franschhoek Literary Festival? I would be flippant if I used superlatives to describe this engrossing panel discussion on "The rich traditions and global origins of fiction in oral story telling". I had expected something rather bland, but the reality was far different. This was both entertainment and Oral Lit 101 rolled into a convenient package. Victor Dlamini's masterful guidance of the discussion ensured that everyone got their money's worth and left the hall both cheered and informed.

Dlamini opened the discussion by remarking that it is a fallacy that oral literatures have been replaced by the craft of writing. I raised my eyebrows, initially, but my interest was piqued when Javier Perez, a performance poet, explained in careful detail that spoken word as a genre can be traced back to the oral traditions of Africa. He broke one of my own misconceptions into tiny pieces when he affirmed that spoken word 'works' across language barriers, that in the act of performance, the musicality and artist's delivery skills combine to transcend any language and/ or grammatical barriers. How right he is. Prompted by an audience member, he gave an impromptu spoken word performance and the piece, mixing hip-hop rhythm, English and Spanish, was a delight to witness. More was to come.

Sindiwe Magona is well known as a writer of pedigree and experience. When asked to comment on the genesis of her new novel, *Chasing the Tails of My Father's Cattle*, she distilled her art into a single, potent sentence: "I was just telling a story". I had known this, of course, but the truth of it sunk home and humbled me slightly. The simple elegance of this was reinforced when Magona read an extract from her book (she reads beautifully)

and it became abundantly clear that the story was the work's engine and needed few literary props to sustain it. She explained, too, that one of the reasons she writes (so prolifically and successfully, I might add) is to inspire others, particularly those who might consider themselves somehow disadvantaged to craft their own stories and tell them too. Encouraging words, indeed, for the pleasing number of younger people sitting in the audience. It was left to Perez to complete my initiation into the potential of spoken word though.

I was intrigued to hear Perez explain that spoken word is driven by social media – that platforms like Twitter and You Tube are the performance spaces of choice for young spoken word artists. Immediately I began thinking how this effectively bypassed the difficulties of 'getting published' that aspirant writers face. That is not to say that he (or I) believe that 'conventional' publishing is redundant, far from it. Instead, Perez pointed out that Gen Z (today's young people) integrate social media into their lives so fluidly, that they both respect and exploit the potential of social media to drive cultural projects forward. I know of a local poet (Hugh Hodge) who has made the 120-character limit of the SMS the perfect framework for pin sharp poems, so it makes sense that these new media (well they are new to me – I'm 55!) will inspire many. I'll certainly trawl YouTube for spoken word performances, starting with the work of Perez.

So, that's how it was. A delightful hour that passed by far too quickly. Informative, inspiring and uplifting. I had much to think about as I threaded my way down the street in search of a good coffee and a chance to soak in the experience.

Author and Photographer: Mike Hagemann
Editor: Martina van Heerden

What is *The University and its Worlds*?

The University of the Western Cape together with the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) hosted a panel discussion titled, *The University and its Worlds,* on Thursday evening at 5:30pm. The panel was made up of Prof David Theo Goldberg, Prof Judith Butler, Prof Wendy Brown and Prof Achille Mbembe, with Prof Premesh Lalu as the chair.

Achille Mbembe, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and David Theo-Goldberg at *The University and its Worlds* panel discussion

The first panellist, Goldberg, spoke about the development of the University in the USA. He used the metaphor of an "uberisation" to explain the supply and demand dynamic in the context of higher education. His discussion also referred to the popular #FeesMustFall ongoing debate that started in October 2015 as South African universities announced a national fee increase which students refused to accept.

Brown's discussion provided a technical crash course on the crisis that universities will face if they give in to the privatisation and financialisation of the academy. According to Brown, neoliberalism has resulted in the privatisation of universities by "reformatting every level of structure of the university based on a

business model". Brown argued that privatised higher education loses its right as a mode of education and results in anti-critical spaces of learning. Her discussion explained the profit-driven focus that is at the heart of business and compared it to the ratings-driven focus that has become the heart of the university. According to Brown, the shareholder dimension has spilled into universities because the future value of the academy depends on speculation, which is needed to attract future investments. Thus, the ranking and ratings systems determine the value of the university.

Brown suggested that these ratings govern universities by shaping pedagogy and the lines of research that are pursued and prioritised, among other factors. This, in effect, results in disincentives to critical thought projects as the risk of relevance and funding becomes a central concern.

She argued that there are two important projects for the university in the 21st century. The first is to conduct and offer research that is orientated to this world, for instance, global integration, addressing climate change and unsustainably organised geographies. Brown emphasised that the purpose and ethos of universities remains critical and specific to the present time. Her second point was to "bring the outsiders in", thus, bringing the dispossessed and marginalised within the university to attempt to rectify the historic inequalities that have for so long divided communities including the university. This is especially difficult because it coincides with a time of privatization and entrenching of privilege. Thus neoliberalisation, privatisation and financialisation of the university is a threat to the project of decolonising the university.

Judith Butler took to the podium with an opening quote by Gramsci: "Destruction is difficult; it is as difficult as creation".

Judith Butler speaking about violence on campuses

Butler asked some very serious questions that have powered many of the debates around decolonising the university. Among others, she asked whether a university could remain a structure for critical thought when its very knowledge structure is exclusive to a privileged minority.

Butler argued that in South Africa and the Global South more broadly, to have to conform to universal standards of 'excellence' is to conform to colonisation and racism. She suggested that in order for institutes of the academy in the Global South to reach what is called 'excellence', these spaces have to mimic European standards of education which is to a very large extent made up of colonial literatures and histories.

Furthermore, Butler affirmed that in order to allow for new forms of imagining the future, the university needs to write histories that speak to the people who have been marginalised. Speaking back to Brown's last important point, Butler reiterated that "we have to be outside when we are inside", so that we are able to transform spaces from ones of exclusivity to inclusivity.

Butler also posed some very controversial questions, such as: "What would it mean to emerge from apartheid? And should the tactics of radical critique be violent?" She noted that very often radical critique becomes criminalised (referring to the securitisation and censorship at universities that are enforced as a

response to disruptive students) once students reach the limit of tolerance and physically act out their disruptions.

The crowded audience at The University and its Worlds

Butler asked, "Why is disruption not welcome [on university campuses] when there is clearly still so much to disrupt?" A crowded audience applauded her question.

Mbembe's discussion began with what appeared to be a caricature of decolonisation. He said there is no space today that is not saturated with the term decolonisation and even joked that he saw the call for papers to a conference titled "decolonising the orgasm".

Mbembe argued that we are at a moment where everything and everyone must fall; however, while we are busy destroying we must ask whether, "there is anything that can be saved from destruction". He was referring to the protest action by students in South Africa that has destroyed buildings and other university infrastructure as a means of protest. His telling comment was that "creating chaos as a way of governing is a way of privatising as well".

Mbembe at the podium

Mbembe's discussion highlighted that there is a danger in the over-reliance of difference as the political motivation. He suggested that perhaps we are fighting something that is already dead [the university], "we are fighting things that are completely dead… and wasting a lot of time while the world is going somewhere else" he said. In order to transform the inherited "ethno-university" of South Africa, he said, "we have to recapitalise the university". Mbembe highlighted that the Vice Chancellor and other Vice Chancellors should be lobbying government to recapitalise the university. Lalu thanked the panellists for their contributions and opened the floor for a round of questions.

Director of the CHR directs questions from the floor to panellists

The first question, which was in the style of a comment, instead, was asked by a student in the audience who seemed to be representing a larger number of student voices in the audience. He remarked that, there is no use talking to academics or intellectuals because they do nothing during violent times on campus. He emphasised that "these talks will not reach the townships and it does not reflect the democracy".

A second question asked was: "Who is defining the term 'violence' and for what purpose?"

Another question, in conversation with Butler's comments about the importance of disruptions, asked was: "What is violence and what is disruption?" Butler responded that she does not think all disruptions are violent. It is very often the case that student protests that are disruptive are called violent so that police can be brought in, something she believes we have to dismantle. She did however state her own personal commitment to non-violence.

Student from the audience questions the presence of White bodies in a space that is supposed to be opening up for Black bodies.

The next question, by John Higgins, was interested in finding out who the social and political allies might be for those of us in the universities. Higgins emphasised "who are they or how do we create them?" Butler responded briefly saying that the university needs to have a link between itself and the communities it serves, otherwise they will be disconnected.

Another question, which referred back to the first, translated the question into: "Can the Subaltern speak?" quoting Spivak. Butler highlighted that when Spivak asked if the subaltern can speak, she (Spivak) did not answer "no". According to Butler, Spivak thought we should subject dominant modes of speaking to decolonisation. Mbembe jumped in, remarking that "it seems to me that the subaltern speaks all the time – but who is listening?"

Brown responded to a critique of her technical breakdown of financialisation and why it matters. She asked what is the university for at this historical conjuncture and concluded that we are in a complex space.

So, why does financialisation matter? Our diagnosis of the current context matters, she said, because if we do not know how the university is governed, then we will not know what to bring into the classroom and what actually matters.

The floor was once again opened for a final round of questions at which point some conflict arose between a group of students calling for disruption and audience member, Xolela Mangcu, Professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

At 7:30pm a group of students who are apparently aligned with the Black Consciousness movement raised their voices singing, clapping and dancing on tables, challenging the purpose and space of the panel discussion. Discussion ended because of disruption and the audience exited peacefully.

Protesting students disrupt panel discussion with singing and by occupying the audience's space

Author and Photographer: Nehna Singh

Editors: Martina van Heerden and Prof Shirley Brooks

Contributors

Nasser Zadeh

Born in Tabriz, Iran in 1953, Nasser N. Zadeh has taken part in over 100 solo and group exhibitions during his career; notably a solo presentation at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in Iran. He is most recognised for his masterful handling of oil, acrylic and watercolour paints. Prior to his first solo exhibition in 1978, N. Zadeh worked as a carpet designer and weaver and has continued to implement aspects of this into his painting.

Simonne Stellenboom

Simonne has three Finance related degrees but oddly enough has always been drawn to jobs around people development whether it be academia or human capital development. She expresses herself better in writing and merely pretends to be a confident speaker. When it comes to being deeply honest about her beliefs or experiences – she writes letters to her parents, partner and of late even to her boss. Words allow Simonne to be as descriptive and as enigmatic as she needs to be.

Lorenzo van Schalkwyk

Lorenzo is multi-racial and he admits that he likes that a lot. He has had classical training in piano and started playing when he was 6. He also has Grade 5 Unisa Theory and Grade 7 Practical. Lorenzo was only 3 when Princess Diana died but he remembers everything. He then became a bit obsessed with the monarchy (although he hates Charles and the Queen based on what he has read in Diana's biographies). He then imitated the English accent when he was 5 and it stuck a bit. He is in love with the romantic period. Lorenzo loves learning and would like to do charity work one day. He completed a C1 language course in Germany, and has more than 40 certificates for Music and Academics, 1 medal and 1 trophy.

Luisa Rath

Luisa studied a BA degree at the University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany and is currently writing her MA thesis in the field of literary studies. For one year of her Master's degree (2012-2013) she studied as an international student at the University of the Western Cape and became intrigued by the study of African literature. Her essay was the result of a course with Dr. Fiona Moolla from the English Department.

Julia Kabat

Julia has recently graduated with a distinction in Fine Art. She also received the Michaelis Directors 'Special Award' for student leadership in 2015. She is an avid collector of 'things' and uses concepts surrounding 'imagination' to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary, in changing conventional perceptions. Printmaking and Sculpture is her passion within the field of Fine Art.

Guest Editors

Dr Kate Highman

Kate Highman is an Andrew Mellon postdoctoral fellow and is working on the history and politics of English Literature as a university discipline in South Africa, focusing on Historically Black Institutions. Prior to joining the CHR, Kate held an NRF postdoctoral fellowship on 'Plagiarism, Copyright and Cultural Ownership in South African letters', a project that emerged out of her PhD work, completed at the University of York (UK), on debates about plagiarism and cultural ownership in South Africa. Together with Dr Paige Sweet (CHR affiliate) she continues to run a collaborative project on 'The Politics of the Copy'* which explores how issues of ownership, authorship, intellectual property, knowledge production and access, and race intersect in the global south. Broadly her interests are in postcolonial book history, literary institutions, and critical pedagogy. She has taught at Rhodes University, the University of York, Stellenbosch University, the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape.

*(https://thepoliticsofthecopy.wordpress.com)

Zuleika Shaik

Zuleika is currently registered for an MA degree, in Forensic History at the University of the Western Cape. Her research focuses on the Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT) and their search for political activists who went missing as a result of enforced disappearances during the apartheid era. Her previous research on the 'Families of the Missing in Argentina, Bosnia and South Africa' awarded her an Honours Cum Laude. She has also been passionate about literature and literature studies since undergrad, and received the Book Prize award for English 3, among her many academic accolades.

Editorial Board

Mike Hagemann

Mike Hagemann is currently doing his PhD at The University of the Western Cape. He is researching the poetry written by Chas Lotter, a Rhodesian soldier who served throughout the duration of the war, a war he also served in. He completed his MA at UWC in 2004 / 2005. He taught high school English, Geography and Tourism for 30 years before deciding to take an extended sabbatical. His academic interests are art photography, comix, humour and queer studies. He has published a number of poems and short stories locally and internationally. Mike serves as creative writing editor and content writer for the postgraduate online journal *WritingThreeSixty*.

Martina van Heerden

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Thank you,
Editor-in-Chief
Nehna Daya Singh

About our Cover: *"Bo-Kaap"* by Nasser Zadeh

The paintings in N. Zadeh's most recent body of work are distinctly Impressionistic, capturing a sense of the emotive experience of being *in situ* and emphasising the play of light at a specific time of day. While N. Zadeh's scenes undoubtedly convey the quiet solitude of isolated moments, the paintings also suggest a snapshot of the ebb and flow of daily life within these locations. It is important for the artist that the individuals in his paintings are depicted in the midst of activity; they are still in the process of enacting what will in a second become a memory. The same is true of the depicted architecture and street scenes; the paintings reflect them as they are at a particular moment. In time, due to the development of the urban landscape, they may change entirely to the point of being unrecognisable. The paintings then become the future memories to which the title refers.

There is a strong sense of flux in N. Zadeh's work and the paintings in 'Future Memories' pull the viewer between a number of dichotomies. While the scenes are timeless, the relationship between the people and their environments is fleeting. The compositions are static and fixed while also seemingly imbued with perpetual motion. Furthermore, the paintings themselves continuously shift as N. Zadeh's handling of paint comes to the fore. While the works may initially appear to the viewer as astute representational portraits of street scenes, they transform the moment that the painterly brushstrokes, flecks of unlikely colour and areas of unpainted canvas push forward. In an instant, the scenes shift into abstract watery dreamscapes before returning the viewer to an intermediate space between the two states. In this way, N. Zadeh is able to use his paintings to capture the interplay between the haze of scenes from a memory and the clarity of being in the present.

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