Wanda Balzano and Silvana Carotenuto

Views from Elsewhere: *Oeuvres* of Female Displacement
Editorial

Exile is an uncomfortable situation, though it is also a magical situation.
(Hélène Cixous, *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*)

Writing is impossible without some kind of exile.
(Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*)

Female Knowledge on/in Exile

This special issue of *Anglistica AION* is the product of a keen collaboration between two colleagues at two different universities – the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' and Wake Forest University, North Carolina – and emerges from a multi-pronged international project that is very much open and in progress. Its genesis can be dated as far back as 2007, when relevant research around exile and migrant women, conducted at 'L'Orientale', culminated in a project called "I percorsi dell'esilio: le donne migranti".[1] As part of a larger cultural festival called "La civiltà delle donne" (4-8 March, 2007), that project consisted of three multi-media laboratories intent on exploring the female experience of exile through the practices of writing, photography and video-art. Silvana Carotenuto, who spearheaded the project, re-proposed its themes in a workshop on "Exile Writing, Arts, and Technologies of Women" at the 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA 2011) in Istanbul. The workshop centered around four foci: (1) Reflections on Exile – Woman's I/Eye in In-Between Spaces; (2) *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* – a laboratory of digital photography on Istanbul; (3) Reading Visions: Women and Survival; and (4) Digital Diaspora/Diasporic Dance. In that context, questions that were explored ranged from the psychoanalytical perspective (*How does exile affect the feminine psyche? What does it produce in terms of dreams, deliriums, nightmares? What links the experience of exile to memory?*) to Derridean concepts of hospitality. In addition to the theoretical debates, there was a practical outcome: the international workshop participants were invited to use their own cameras, iPhones, smartphones, and produce a photo-story after their visits to 'in-between' sites of Istanbul (stations, squares, the port, markets) that they identified as places of transit, passage, encounters, in order to trace back their personal experiences – of loss, displacement, non-belonging, postponement – of inhabiting a foreign city.[2] The emphasis on women's exile and its expression in art and (through) technology was the driving focus of that workshop and also drives this special issue of *Anglistica AION*.

[1] You can watch the film "I percorsi dell'esilio" (Hermannfilm, 2007) at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stteSX7w1ys, 8 July 2013.

[2] For the outline of the project, go to the Saban University Website: http://isea2011.sabanciuniv.edu/workshop/exile-writing, 8 July 2013. For the creative material produced during the ISEA workshop, see the website created for the event: http://www.melissaramos.com.au/exile_writing/istanbul_exile_writing.html, 8 July 2013

In order to accompany the work for the creation of this collection, Wanda Balzano led, together with Lynn Book, a 2012-2013 Humanities Institute faculty seminar at Wake Forest University, which included a heterogeneous group of scholars and practitioners of English, Theater and Dance, Communication, American Ethnic Studies, Romance Languages, Women's and Gender Studies. The seminar was invested in scrutinizing feminist values and fostering scholarship that engages broader and under-recognized themes and works of dissent, creative action and social change from multiple transnational perspectives, with a particular interest in how contemporary discourses of 'migration', 'diaspora', and 'exile' both resist and transform rhetorical and social practices in the US and abroad. Interaction with invited artists such as Myriam Chancy and Josefina Báez added relevance to these investigations. Of course our transatlantic collaboration under the auspices of *Anglistica AION* was implicitly facilitated by modern technology through regular email exchanges as well as VoIP software and streaming media.

The contributions presented here reveal to readers the need to cross-examine the specific knowledge that women produce as they find themselves in the various predicaments of exile, over different times and places, generations and cultures. Their desire to 'think the difference' is matched by an ability to practice the *téchne* of writing, art, and performance. We have therefore divided the issue in two main conceptual frames, each with their respective sections. In "Female Knowledge on/in Exile" we have grouped contributions where language, crossing, and technology are emphasized in order to express women's need and desire to *know* exile – to understand what feelings and experiences are specific to their lives, and how they can think of, share, and bequeath them to others for an easier navigation in their diverse worlds. In their 'passing through', exiled women value the trace of new grounds to explore, but also the re-writing of history (especially if their stories have been marginalized or erased), and the preservation of memory – a place where the same and the other, the living and the leaving can co-exist. While losing their original ground, their identity, and their language, women survive the 'scattering' or diaspora by developing a new understanding of themselves and of others. The final section of this issue, "Diasporas in the Making", makes it clear that one of the conditions of survival for exiles is *transformation*: the extreme displacement instigates a similarly extreme determination to change ways of knowing, through seeing, speaking, and writing. In order to live a new life it is necessary to create new communities, where collaborations are valued as indispensable exchanges. Through such interactions the displacement confronts and 'exposes' both the origin and the lack of it, the grounded and the groundless, the native and the migrant. In the end, to be on new ground means to be able to transform knowledge, to act differently, and invent gestures – 'events' – that are performed in the attempt to make sense of one's encounter with the elsewhere.

The relevant questions that are investigated in this issue of *Anglistica AION* ask: "What links the predicament of exile to creativity? Why do women use the arts as a way to express suffering and mark the geographic, political, and cultural

displacement generated by diasporas? How do digital diasporas represent the female experience of exile?" In essence, such knowledge is not logocentric and realistic but poetic and evocative. Poetry is language pared down to its bare bones and re-elaborated into a skillful *téchne*: in its spontaneous immediacy, it lends itself to a variety of discourses that are left open, and sometimes left unconnected. For this reason, it represents a ductile expression for those who are displaced: poetry is to language what exile is to journey.

Poetics of language – The internationally acclaimed writer and Teheran-born Shahrnush Parsipur opens our collection with a unique piece that is an elegy to living in an elsewhere. She creates a visionary world that is between life and death in order to better navigate her surroundings as an exile: "I am sorry that I can't go back to my native land. 'There' all my books are banned, and 'here' nobody reads my books because they are in Persian. I live in a limbo, but I smile, because life is beautiful."[3] Surviving in between (countries, languages, and cultures) is a staple of this kind of living – and knowing. In the subsequent poem by Mary Kennan Herbert, through a distant memory of 1955, a woman remembers her graduation ceremony, which represents an important rite of passage – it is almost like going through a door to find oneself exiled into the future. The uncertainty of what the future might bring is expressed in the tentative question about the possibility of failing or succeeding, in the hope – as futile as a deodorant – that there will be some protection even when, at a later stage, one will be cut off from the past: "Will we fail or succeed, will our deodorant protect us for the next fifty years. Sixty?"[4] To this poem, another follows, written by Ada Emërimir, an emerging poet who has herself experienced several exiles, traversing the 'doors' of Albania, Canada, and Hungary. The crossing of national frontiers often takes place at the airport's check points, or in the cabin of an airplane. Travelling by and through air gives the sense of a life that is suspended: the breathing becomes more difficult and the bones appear as organic matter on which the dreams of the exiled are sedimented ("Much more otherness sedimented on my bones"[5]).

These are dreams of stasis and of origins ("Kept dreaming about my mom"[6]) that mirror the impossibility of lingering in one place, as Marta Cariello also describes in her analysis of poetry and art by contemporary Palestinian-American women writers and artists. While in certain localities "Waiting is Forbidden", in the political sense that no loitering or stasis is allowed, but, rather, a compulsion to move is enforced, as in the case of the Palestinians, on the other hand, especially for those women who resist domesticity and the discourses of womanhood in relation to the home/land, movement is impelling and unavoidable. The reckoning that, with one's home in pieces, moving is necessary causes many women writers and artists to find a way to challenge assumptions about what signifies home and belonging and to resist any fixing of identity by gender, race, or sexuality. In recent years, in Palestinian and Palestinian-American poetry the presence of landscapes intensifies, as if to counterbalance uprootedness and displacement. Hopes and – real and imagined – experiences are distilled in the bodies of those women

[3] Shahrnush Parsipur, "Artist's Statement", this issue, 17.

[4] Mary Kennan Herbert, "Everything I Needed to Know", this issue, 24.

[5] Ada Emërimir, "This Mid-air Ek-sistence", this issue, 26.

[6] Ibid.

who, in order to claim the cogency of their dreams, seek out a mother tongue and transform themselves in the creative urgency to continue to live by experimenting, writing, and articulating themselves in a range of media and artistic expressions.

In the poems of the South African writer Makhosazana Xaba, women run even in their sleep, with their bodies as "comrades in flight",[7] ready, with one hand, to cast stones and, with the other, to help those who fall. As if in answer to the newly graduated woman of Herbert's poem, who was asking, "Will we fail...?",[8] Xaba admits that failing is an intrinsic part of the condition of those women who are exposed to the nightmares of violence, apartheid, war, diaspora – "I have known corpses… / I have known ashes…".[9] Yet, when women manage to get up again, they run as fast as the rhythm of their dreams, and become stronger in their pursuit of freedom. As they cannot rest or forget their goals until social justice is achieved, they keep running: "How can we forget when being on the run has become the natural rhythm of our sleep?"[10] Such predicament produces a different kind of knowledge – one in which the poet herself, renamed "Fish", learns to immerse herself in, as if in a "river".[11] For us readers, the suggestion is that writers and survivors such as Xaba use their fluid existence to accuse, to reconcile, to rebuild, often through an ethic of care toward those who are in need to be protected: "He doesn't know that when we send him away to sleep at sunset, / we start another mission of hiding women and children in these graves / so they can at least get some sleep and feed their infants in peace."[12] These forms of knowledge are troublesome, however, as they echo a question that cannot remain silent: who or what will shield the bodies of the women who run, fight back, and bravely mark the paths of the world? In Xaba's own words, the question – which remains unanswered – rings with spiritual truth: "Who will wash my feet?"[13]

Technologies of Crossing – The circumstances and styles in which natives devolve into exiles may differ widely, but the dilemmas that all displaced figures confront are often the same. Each loses the ability to live comfortably at home, and must work more industriously than natives to fashion a sense of placement out of forbidding places. For many exiles, the first task is to determine just what kind of exile they have experienced. What brought them to this place? How far have they travelled, geographically and psychologically? Where, exactly, are they? Can they make sense of their surroundings and be true to their roots through the use of technology or does technology, in some cases, augment their distance from their (perhaps rural) home? Some search for role models from whom they might learn answers to these questions, and on whose experiences they can base their own plans for the future. Some others – as Parsipur in "George Orwell and I. An Article" – reflect on the role of freedom and self-determination, debating whether technology is a 'prosthesis' that hampers or facilitates knowledge. Not all technology enhances culture in a creative way; technology can also help facilitate political oppression and war via tools such as guns.

The tales of transit that Manuela Esposito presents to us are mainly sea voyages undertaken throughout history by women as they have been forced to move

[7] Makhosazana Xaba, "Sleep Runners", this issue, 42.

[8] Herbert, "Everything I Needed to Know", 24.

[9] Makhosazana Xaba, "The River Speaks of Ashes", this issue, 43.

[10] Xaba, "Sleep Runners", this issue, 42.

[11] Xaba, "The River Speaks of Ashes", this issue, 43.

[12] Xaba, "Digging for Freedom", this issue, 46.

[13] Xaba, "Who Will Wash My Feet?", this issue, 47.

from Africa, Asia, or the Caribbean to Great Britain, continental Europe, and the Americas. The poetics of three diasporic artists – Andrea Levy, Roshini Kempadoo, and Julie Otsuka – go back in time, recalling the historical migrations such as the Middle Passage from Africa to the Caribbean, the experiences of the 'mail order brides' from Japan to the United States, and, more recently, the mass migrations from Africa to Europe, across the Mediterranean. The specific crafts and tools (technologies) used by these artists – writing, installations, and photographic archives – form an innovative language that conveys the influential experiences of a geographic and political displacement.

The writing in this section is characterised by a marked desire for crossing spaces. In the process of crossing seas or crossing lands, women develop strategies of survival that guarantee their inclusion in the complex maps of history, often when they would have been marginalized and discriminated against. From this perspective, Gabriela Seccardini reads the narrative strategies adopted by Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić in counteracting the destruction of war and in redrawing new maps that provide inclusion rather than exclusion. If oppressive governments assume the right to rewrite history, to confiscate or to destroy memory through censorship, propaganda and war, Ugrešić identifies narration, the book, and the museum as the technologies that save memory by keeping it alive. Putting fragments together to recompose an exiled life provides the exiled with the ways in which they might locate themselves in the unknown world through unknown routes. According to Seccardini, "Exile provides a style, a technique to remember and arrange the scattered pieces of a broken life in a narrative unity, whether material or verbal."[14]

[14] Gabriela Seccardini, "'Life with an Adaptor, so We Don't Burn Ourselves': The Book, Memory and the Museum in Dubravka Ugrešič 's Poetics of Exile", this issue, 77.

Annalisa Piccirillo finds out what happens to the transit of artworks that are dislocated from their original places of representation – or 'homeland' – to new critical and poetic sites of technical visibility. In particular, she analyses the diasporic performances of Emily Jacir, Shilpa Gupta, and Latifa Laâbissi as they are transformed in different genres, executed on transnational stages, and reproduced on digital platforms in order to increase the circulation and appreciation of their art in a world, such as the virtual one, which knows no boundaries. The most modern tools of technology help artists to cross worlds, and yet worlds have always been crossed by artists while availing of one of the most ancient forms of technology, that is, writing. Seen as an activity that forms or changes culture, writing is a technology that lessens physical barriers to communication, and allows people to interact freely on a global scale, traversing different worlds, cultures, and languages.

Whether the traversed worlds are stable or in (political or geologic) turmoil, writing reflects a way to be in control, to fulfill needs, or satisfy wants. In the case of Myriam J. A. Chancy, the Haitian-Canadian writer who is also a scholar, writing reflects "how it feels to remain culturally Haitian but dispossessed of one's homeland, dealing with the joy of a return, and the non-ending fissure from pasts that continue into the present and in the future".[15] When written language fails her in

[15] Myriam J. A. Chancy, abstract, this issue.

trying to fully express loss and hope in Haiti, Chancy uses photography in order "to catch some fleeting moments of beauty in the everyday".[16] Her photographs, "taken in passing, while traveling into not-easily-accessible landscapes",[17] become a creative tool to express what is not entirely possible to render in writing. For Maija Mäniken, the tension between staying and going parallels the nomadic existence of Chancy, while her writing (here in the form of an extract from her novel in progress entitled *Good Evening. My Name is Anja Ortelin*) reveals a world of self-exile, even eliciting invisibility and silence – one filled with secret voices and past memories of a mother, a father, a grandmother. The narrative plunders the author's personal experiences as a bilingual, bicultural woman and spans thirty-five years in the American life of a Finnish model/actress, whose journey through the Mid West, New York, and Texas, crosses the layers of American society. While Chancy is trying to catch some ephemeral moments of beauty in the everyday, Makinen expresses her protagonist's effort to seek refuge in some kind of friendship or human contact, one which is desired but never accomplished: "This would have been the only chance to catch the famous smile, but no one was looking."[18]

In this section, Maltese writer Marie Anne Zammit offers a violent portrayal of what is a terrifying type of ethnic crossing: rape perpetrated with the purpose of ethnic cleansing. In "Holocaust in My Mind" she has the protagonist relive the traumatic episodes of violence that in 1992 took place against thousands of Muslim women from Bosnia, who were victims of systematic rape by the Serbian Security Forces. As she remembers seeing her sister murdered by the soldiers, this woman also recalls her survival in those camps where she was daily exposed to physical and psychic cruelties intended to degrade her and other fellow women. The only way out, to live beyond the hate planted by the Serbian soldiers in the wombs of the imprisoned and tortured women, is to cross this very hate by opposing to it the love and care for a new life, "a child who was innocent".[19] Even though the child is unaware of being the product of a violent history, for the mother he will always carry the traces of her unspeakable trauma. Exiled from herself and from her inner peace, this woman is confronted with an impossible finality, assaulted as she is in the mind as she was previously in the body, living "a life of 'mental death', when the body survives and the trauma remains".[20]

Xaba concludes this section as well as the previous one, with her fictional writing 'crossing' her poetic writing. In her poems she had spoken of 'running bodies' – with running being represented as a full-time activity of resistance practiced in the sleep ("Sleep runners") as well as the memory ("My memories run in my veins"). Here, in her story entitled "Running", the female character embodies both the role and the practice ("I'm a runner. That's the role I've given myself").[21] She is portrayed while running, for errands or for delivering news, as part of the administrative support team of the women of the African National Congress who have decided to hold a conference to revise its draft constitution and make it non-sexist. Her role as a runner resembles her role as a soldier: "I'm moving between the two pillars of our struggle,

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Maija Mäniken, "Hiding in Full View: Immigration as Self-Exile", this issue, 106.

[19] Marie Anne Zammit, "Holocaust in My Mind", this issue, 113.

[20] Ibid., 115.

[21] Makhosazana Xaba, "Running", this issue, 117.

mass political mobilisation and the armed struggle. This conference brings in another dimension, the international mobilisation, and I am a part of it."[22] When the conference is interrupted by the news of the murder of Reverend Vukile Dladla, an important political figure in the ANC, the historical reality of the present suddenly shifts to a past episode in the personal history of the female character. She remembers that this man, whose family she visited from time to time as a distant relative, had attempted to rape her when she was only nineteen years of age. The young woman's memories intersect with her present reality of the political conference, creating a link both between the past racial violence and the hope for a new future and between the personal and the political aspects of women's liberation. She runs between past and presence, between black and white, between women and men. Symbolically and physically, she runs away from the violence of the past and toward the hopeful future of peaceful and non-sexist, feminist values.

[22] Ibid., 118.

Diasporas in the Making

That diasporas generate aporias of meanings, in critical terms, is not necessarily a negative thing. As Teresa de Lauretis famously envisioned in her prominent earlier study on *Technologies of Gender*, dominant cultural discourses and their underlying 'master narratives' – be they biological, medical, legal, philosophical, or literary – tend to reproduce and re-textualize themselves, even in feminist rewritings of cultural accounts. In this respect, critiquing institutional discourses, epistemologies, social, and cultural practices means exposing their aporias to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective – a view from 'elsewhere'.[23] That 'elsewhere' is not a mythic distant past or some utopian future history: it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots of its representations. It directly speaks to what Rosi Braidotti terms as "nomadic consciousness" and points to the spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, to the social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the cracks of the power-knowledge apparati.[24]

[23] See Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[24] See Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia Press, 1994).

These interstices and cracks indicate a common location and experience for those who are marginalized or exiled. And yet, it is imperative to keep in mind that, as Edward Said also recognizes in his notable *Reflections on Exile*, although exile is certainly compelling to think about, in the end, undeniably, it is terrible to experience, especially in personal terms:

> It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever.[25]

[25] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1.

When the pain of exile lived as a personal experience is shared, a common language ensues, or at least the ability to fluently communicate 'across' the ethnic and cultural boundaries and frontiers. *Anglistica AION* offers in this special collection a communal space to host an array of different experiences – not with the intent to contain them in a unified discourse, or to heal something that cannot be healed, but for the purpose of giving hospitality to some of those knowledges and practices that are estranged and separated from their origins. In particular, the women's *oeuvres* gathered here form a conceptual elsewhere that can perhaps offer a sense of belonging. In their variety, these *oeuvres* are transient, indomitable, irregular, and excessive, but above all, they are continuously moving – through words, bodies of water, dancing steps, sensations, sounds, and images – as if to embody the very exile they are articulating.

Recognizing the challenge of trying to present the un-representable, this issue of *Anglistica AION,* rather than trying to translate diasporic experiences for an easier understanding, sets out to undo the illusory stability of fixed identities and discourses, bursting open the bubble of ontological security for women and for men, either native or migrant. The various contributions here 'speak' to the notion of passing through, of cutting across different kinds and levels of identity in order to disengage the sedentary nature of words, destabilizing commonsensical meanings, and deconstructing established forms of consciousness. In this 'scattering' of sorts, in this critical aporias and geographical diasporas, we are all temporary guests, trying to survive in new spaces of hospitality.

To resist assimilation, the displaced women who inhabit the dedicated space in this journal become agents of creation. Together or alone, they produce gestures set on inventing or uncovering different realities. It is through their 'making' that immanent values are exposed. It is through their *oeuvres* – in Derrida's sense as performative actions – that boundaries are open to unexpected, uncontainable events.[26] Such *oeuvres* are defined by the gestures of a 'writing' that is envisioned in its widest sense as a plural act of 'making': "I am calling it writing (*écriture*), even though it can remain purely oral, vocal, and musical: rhythmic or prosodic."[27] In 'writing' exile, women participate in the process of constituting feminist genealogies as commonly shared discursive and political practices. Through their collaborations they establish an elsewhere, which is primarily a sort of counter-memory and a space of resistance.

Collaborations - The collaboration between and among women is acted out in the shared writing of Jill Hermann-Wilmarth and Teri Holbrook in "Becoming-Exiles in Shifting Borderlands" and of Morehshin Allahyari and Jennifer Way in "Romantic Self-Exiles". Laura Fantone's essay on Asian diasporas also investigates a female partnership between two contemporary artists such as Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Both with jobs in the American academy, Jill Hermann-Wilmarth and Teri Holbrook have been friends since they were in college. Their continued close friendship was marked by two sudden events that separated them from their own

[26] After the historical evolution of the classical work and the semiology in favor of the "text", Jacques Derrida in "The University without Condition", in *Without Alibi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) welcomes a return to the "oeuvre", in the sense of its 'making' or 'performing aspect'.

[27] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 65.

selves and shook them at the core: for one, an unexpected diagnosis of cancer, for the other, the birth of a daughter affected by developmental disability. The pair call their abrupt undesirable experiences "a diaspora of self", where "seismic moments when identities break" cause them to feel fractured and fragmented.[28] Hence, the need for their identities to build on new (however shaky) ground and elicit further connections. Hence, the expression of new desires, the sharing of anxieties and successes in order to gather sufficient energy to transform the traumatic events in positive understanding: "How do such instances, when the soil beneath us vibrates and separates, provoke us to create? How are they opportunities to articulate need, to re-imagine connections, to become community? Once we find ourselves surprised and walking among shards, how can we find the space and energy to re-form, knowing that the ground, once disrupted, is never stable?"[29]

[28] Jill Hermann-Wilmarth and Teri Holbrook, "Becoming-Exiles in Shifting Borderlands", this issue, 127.

[29] Ibid., 128.

Availing of the theoretical and poetic support of Gloria Anzaldúa, of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the two authors record the first shock at their respective realizations, the sentiment of themselves before and after their traumatic discovery, while writing to each other. In doing this, they theorize about the invention and the becoming-community of friends who, living on the border – of life and death, hope and despair – learn how to transform loss into a surplus of meaning. They attempt to make connections using the fragments of their shattered identities. Through the use of collage, multimedia, texts in juxtaposition, and 'found compositions', Hermann-Wilmarth and Holbrook aim to articulate sense in the disorder of their lives. The connections are both personal and academic, across borders, texts, and images, and they are made visible in order to map out new territories to counteract the sudden disintegrations of identity and build around them a community that is necessary among those who have experienced personal exiles: "The community we've built is with multiple Jills and multiple Teris, who needed each other in order to learn that the margins weren't lonely. Instead, the margins can be an opened space where community is fostered to inform, bolster, and create intellectual growth central to moving forward."[30]

[30] Ibid., 131.

These margins and this opened space need a community not only for sharing notions of medicalized living but also, in certain circumstances, for creating and sharing the artistic expression of ethnic identities. Such a special space, in postcolonial terms referred to as 'third space', is what sustains the 'writing diaspora' as theorized by Rey Chow.[31] It is also what links the two artists Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Trinh T. Minh-ha in the analysis of Laura Fantone, an Italian scholar who teaches at U.C. Berkeley. In the effort to write about their own exiled condition, both artists, who belong to the post-war East-Asian diaspora, assertively position themselves outside of pre-conceived, Orientalist notions that tend to stereotype identities, segregating them into a ghetto. These artists seek to elude the politics of polarity and emerge on the international scene as 'the others of themselves'. Fantone's essay focuses on Cha's work in particular: this extraordinary artist, who died a premature death, lyrically inscribes the traces of her exile on the screen of her installations and on the page of her texts. Her work occurs primarily within lan-

[31] Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

guage (both native and non-native) and aims to simultaneously embody and explode conventional forms of belonging and identity. In one of Cha's beautiful poems the word "Exilée" literally disintegrates, revealing and re-veiling the island (the "île" in "Exilée") and isolation contained in and exceeded by it. In the same way that words lose linearity but gain expressive impact when they are fragmented, so the images that are interrupted, divided, contracted and expanded increase their power to express a full range of diasporic identities in each of the fragmented visions.

Fantone considers how Cha's gift of 'opaque transparency' in writing and vision inspires Trinh T. Minh-ha, who meets Cha in the '70s. Both artists exemplify a creative tension towards a 'third' political and cultural space, presenting Western educated audiences with a disorienting experience that does not match their expectations. Trinh T. Minh-ha intensifies the plurality and, simultaneously, the singularity of those voices, languages and expressions that resist pre-defined and univocal identities. In her vocabulary of hybridity, there are "many and one between(s)". The 'third' political and cultural space she refers to concerns a hybrid identity that keeps negotations open "between strategic nationalism and transnational political alliance".[32]

Similar cultural negotiations are present in the collaboration between the Iranian new-media artist and art activist Morehshin Allahyari and the American art historian Jennifer Way around Allahyari's installation and unpublished notes of *Romantic Self-Exiles,* consisting of postcards, a film, a 3D animation and video projecting around and through a Plexiglas maquette of Tehran. Based as it is on a "shifting and ambivalent attachment" to Allahyari's homeland, the artwork becomes "a site of emotional geography" that engages with place and memory from the perspective of leaving yet remaining connected to Iran.[33] Allahyari belongs to the second generation of Iranians who have left the native land in voluntary exile. The creative and critical elements of displacement, nostalgia, and collective memory are articulated in the unpublished notes about her installation and also in the internet exchanges with many Iranian self-exiles world-wide. The result is a 'transnational embodiment' of alternative spaces (or 'third spaces') for the Iranian nation state. As Jennifer Way indicates, the oeuvre is multi-pronged: in addition to the series of postcards with names, dates and details from all over the world, the diary of Allahyari's own mother, written at the time she was pregnant with her daughter, is transformed into a film entitled "The Recitation of a Soliloquy" that contains overlapping maps, among various other elements. In the exchange between Allahyari and Way, between those who left Teheran and those who stayed, between mother and daughter, Teheran emerges as the embodiment of the projected feelings of those who love it, knowing full well that a return home, even though imagined or remembered, is impossible.

Exposures – Among the meanings given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the word 'exposure' there is "the action of uncovering or leaving without shelter or defense; unsheltered or undefended condition": to be 'exposed' can indicate the condition of being vulnerable and subject to harm or danger. Whether we are thinking of migrant children, trafficked women, refugees, legal or illegal migrant

[32] Trinh T. Minh-ha, quoted in Laura Fantone, "Writing Asian Diasporas: Shifting Identities in the Art of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Trinh T. Minh-ha", this issue, 154.

[33] Morehshin Allahyari and Jennifer Way, "Romantic Self-Exiles", this issue, 168.

workers, those who are away from their home(land) are 'exposed' to many dangers and risks, and are often in need of protection while living in unstable or poor living conditions. Martyna Bec, who moved to Berlin from Poland, with some working experience in Africa, is a young photographer who knows all about exposures, both because she takes photographs as part of her artistic career and because she is interested in bringing to light Berlin's underworld, mostly populated by the people of the black diaspora, who are without shelter or defense.

In her series of photographs entitled *Babel*, one of the significant shots, which seems to have been taken from the basement of a building looking up toward the sky, symbolically illustrates the situation of living in an underworld and at the same time it resembles the contours of a dilapidated tower viewed from a level below the ground. The reference to the biblical tower is here obvious: in *Genesis*, a united humanity of the generations that came after the Flood spoke the same language and settled in the land of Shinar to build a tower whose top may reach unto heaven. God, however, went down to earth and confounded their speech, so that they could not understand each other, and scattered them over the face of the earth, and they stopped building the city. The city was called Babel, which in Hebrew means "to jumble".

Jumbled clothes, jumbled pieces of furniture, the jumbled remains of a meal photographed by Bec, all contribute to give the sense of a messy, temporary, and fragmented world inhabited by people speaking different languages who are coming and going, constantly on the move. The black-and-white and sepia shots, mostly taken indoors, suggest how the European metropolis of Berlin is polarized in terms of skin color. The photographs also seem to determine that those who inhabit the metropolitan underworld are held in a kind of mental prison where through their basic functions (eating, sleeping, or making love) attempt to restore a sense of home.

In her artistic statement, Bec asks herself: "How do we function in this world? … What is home? Is it a land, a people, a culture, or is it our own reality, our inner space?"[34] Looking through the lens of her camera, she realizes that, in the multicultural faces and bodies of the people whom she photographs, her own face and body are exposed. In the difficult journey of these diasporic lives and their homelessness she observes her own journey, her own homelessness: "I look for what is common in humans; I look for myself in the faces of other people; the person in front of me is my mirror. Only through this confrontation can I recognize myself: isn't the stranger in front of me the one who defines me?"[35] Recalling Trinh T. Minh-ha's de-centralizing and direct technique for documenting and empowering lives that are 'other' from the viewing subject, thus avoiding objectification, *Babel* is, more than a reportage, a self-exposure. Exposing her own diasporic life in the images of those people and objects she portrays, Bec tries to tell her own personal and subjective story: "[I] tried to tell my personal and subjective story, my truth. The only condition I set for myself was that the real, painful and beautiful picture should be conveyed in the most honest way, using a right and direct language."[36]

[34] Martyna Bec, "Babel", this issue, 177.

[35] Martyna Bec, abstract, this issue.

[36] Ibid.

Other relevant meanings for 'exposure' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* refer to "the action of bringing to public notice; the condition of being exposed to the attention of the general public" or to the notion of 'indecent exposure', that is "the action of publicly exposing one's body in an indecent manner" as well as "the manner or degree in which anything is exposed". All of these meanings are addressed in the essay on exile, survival, and *photographie féminine* by Kelli Moore, an American scholar who works at the intersection between critical legal studies and visual culture. Moore considers exile in relation to the politicization of domestic violence through photography, in particular examining the role of new media on the production of visibility of battered women, situating these practices within ongoing debates about copyright, embodiment, and court-room aesthetics.

Moore's argument is that the feminist photographic art portraying domestic abuse by Ana Mendieta, Donna Ferrato, and Nan Goldin is exiled and barred from museums, popular press and academic scholarship because it follows the same fate of domestic violence: battered women's private experience is ordinarily suppressed from public discourse. In her essay, she exposes controversial images documenting gender violence that were censured and excluded from public spaces because viewed as obscene and, consequently, undertheorized. For Moore, such an exclusion represents a missed opportunity to embark upon the critical interdisciplinary understanding of the trauma of gender violence. She notes how survival, as also demonstrated by Trinh T. Minh-ha, needs to be supported by creative efforts. Even though, in the genocidal aftermath of twentieth- and twenty-first-century political displacements, the "achievements of exile as an artistic vocation" are incomprehensible, the exiled subject uses art in order to assimilate the trauma of exile or displacement.[37] Similarly, for Moore, images of battered women need to be exposed to the collective perceptions as well as academic knowledge of art and law in that they represent one form of such assimilation, necessary for survival.

Acknowledging the inevitable ethical challenges, the relatively overlooked work of these women has nonetheless played a crucial role in the politicization of domestic violence and the visualization of battered women. According to art curator and media theorist Ariella Azoulay, quoted by Moore, the exchange of such traumatic images that are excluded from the direct control of state corporate media invokes a "citizenry of photography".[38] Through the demands of a "civil contract" it bears witness to violence in the politicized exposure of what can be called *photographie féminine*.

Events – In Laura Fantone's analysis of the Asian diaspora contained in this issue of *Anglistica AION*, a 'third' hybrid poetics is found to be capable of disorienting any assumptions concerning where and how 'the other' should speak. In this regard, her essay concludes with words that can be applied to the scope of our collection of essays as a whole: all the works being analyzed here tend to challenge pre-existing assumptions and are mostly "situated at the edges, where things don't end but, on the contrary, where 'events' begin".[39] For this reason, we have placed three performance pieces and 'events' by female artists as an apt conclusion of

[37] Trinh T. Minh-ha, quoted in Kelli D. Moore, "Photographie Féminine: Exile and Survival in Ana Mendieta, Donna Ferrato, and Nan Goldin", this issue, 180.

[38] Ariella Azoulay, quoted in Moore, "Photographie Féminine", 190.

[39] Fantone, "Writing Asian Diasporas", 155.

this special issue on writing exile through arts and technologies. These three performances have been part of our own hybrid journey and partnership across the Atlantic, across exiles and languages.

Josefina Báez is a performer, writer, theatre director and educator who is based in New York, but draws heavily from her own experiences as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic. She is founder and director of Ay Ombe Theatre, and expert in the practice of Performance Autology, which is a creative process based on the physical and mental autobiography of the doer. As the invited performer at the International Conference on *Diasporas and Race* at Wake Forest University (25-27 October 2012), Báez performed *Comrade, Bliss Ain't Playing* at the Reynolda House Museum of Winston-Salem, where Wake Forest is based. We have included here an excerpt from the text of that performance poem that opens with the author's declaration that she has "been migrating since birth. In fact, migration first comes / visible exactly at birth."[40] It is a statement that unexpectedly locates the act of migrating into the body, which in itself affirms that migrating is the most intimate action and part of our human, as well as cultural, *being*. Of course this perspective seems to confine the negative understanding of exile to a limited number of occurrences and invite, in exchange for and in antithesis to that very notion, ideas of mysticism, self-affirmation, spirituality, and love. In fact, when asked by Karina Bautista, in the interview herein included, to talk about her diasporic and pre-diasporic life (she left the Dominican Republic at the age of twelve), Báez states that, as she was surrounded by familial love, she did not feel exiled: "I was with my family here and I was with my family there. So I didn't see it as a big deal, being in *another country*, or anything like that."[41]

[40] Josephina Báez, "Dominicania - Interview with the Artist", this issue, 191.

[41] Ibid., 194.

In Báez's repertoire, the works that most directly deal with issues of migration and absorption of new cultures are *Dominicanish* and *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork*. The latter, also performed in a series of videos that have been included in our special issue, refers to Báez as Dominican York – a term that, according to the *Urban Dictionary*, denotes either a Dominican immigrant living and working in New York City or an American-born person of Dominican descent who was raised in NYC.[42] In her own persona as a Dominican York, Báez embodies the struggles of migrant communities seeking to come to terms with their dislocated sense of identity. Through a rich pastiche of multiple textual and visual art forms, playfully combining elements from different cultural systems, she is able to create performances that transcend traditional attitudes toward the formation of ethnic identities and communities. In her unique 'events', notions of home and belonging, linguistic and cultural exclusivism, as well as rigid racial, gender, and ethnic articulations are challenged, exposed, and reframed.

[42] 'Dominican York' was originally a derogatory word used to address drug dealers and criminals that were deported back to the Dominican Republic.

Another event that does not end, but constantly begins – because it functions as a conceptual Moebius ring where its narrative line reaches its end at its original starting point, but 'on the other side' – is *Traverse*, a silent 8 mm film by Melissa Ramos, an international media artist native of Manila, in the Philippines, currently based in Australia. Ramos was one of the participants in the workshop on exile, women,

arts, and technologies, conducted by Silvana Carotenuto and her research team at the 17th International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA 2011) in Istanbul. In that workshop, post-colonial critiques of the documentary genre were explored to elaborate a new, transnational conception of cinematic experience in films directed by exiled female artists. Being surrounded by water is an entrenched part of the cultural identity of Melissa Ramos, who migrated from the Philippines to Australia – from an archipelago of islands to a much bigger island in the Pacific Ocean.

The opening shot of *Traverse* positions the viewer on firm ground, in front of a luminous expanse of water, with the line of the horizon cutting the screen in two, thus summarizing a dualism of choices: staying or leaving, standing or walking, leaving or dying. The waves of the ocean, in the next shots, are replicated in the waves of a skirt that softly move as the woman who is wearing it walks ahead, with the video camera following her slow steps. Even though we do not see the whole body but only the legs moving, a shadow of the full silhouette is captured in the frame, as if to suggest that, in our journeys, we carry so much more than our bodies and our luggage: memory travels with us, producing islands of aloneness. The shots of the water return at the close of the short film, but this time menacing waves breaking on the rocks allude to a broken, fragmented identity. Darkness, in the end, seems to engulf the silhouette of a woman climbing the rocks, the film, and its viewers.

In an exchange of letters between Ramos and a Palestinian woman that we also publish here, the film 'traverses' different worlds: as Ramos' interlocutor first evokes the emotional stability of her childhood to then move, in the physical and political background of the Mediterranean sea, to an alternating progression of violent and peaceful emotions that include fear and loss, the response of Ramos points to endurance and survival. In her visual vocabulary, water is a force that gives power to those who can understand and master it, whether by travel, by spiritual and/or physical knowledge, or by reverie: "Something I was thinking of, was the eternal gaze of the horizon, the reverie of water, the uncontrollable heavy waters, maternal water & feminine water, purity and morality, violent waters and the voice of waters."[43]

Survival of the feminine is also the theme of Lynn Book's video project entitled *Escapes*, which was launched at Wake Forest University on 26 March 2013, with an introduction by Wanda Balzano reproduced in these pages. It is apt to close this special collection with Book, who reminds us, in her work as well as in her name, of the central presence of writing in artistic discourses and in the use of innovative technologies that focus on women and exile. Her video work is in fact conceived as a book of poems that come alive through her voice in its versatility and polyphony of sounds. The audio is drawn from two live performances of *The Phaedra Escapes* (2012), a collaborative concert project with Chicago sound and media artist Shawn Decker.

Escapes revives the mythological figure of Phaedra into a contemporary sign of escape. In Book's own work she becomes "a divining tool used to locate vo-

[43] Melissa Ramos, "Traverse", this issue, 212.

luptuous frictions between release and containment, stasis and freedom".[44] Her story of exile resonates in the many stories of actual women who successfully survive the hardship of migration. As Phaedra has migrated from the Greek plays of Sophocles and Euripides to the Roman representations of Seneca and Ovid, from Baroque operas to contemporary ones, she "becomes the ideal escape body of our time, resonant with multiple histories and radiant with propositions for possible futures".[45] *Escapes* is, both for Lynn Book and for this volume, a 'beginning': it is Volume 1 of a larger video project comprised of three volumes entitled *UnReading for Future Bodies*. In Volume 2, *Derangements* will explore the Chimera figure with its frightening but ultimately fluid and freeing boundaries. *Fragmenta* is the title of the third volume that will weave together multiple voices of real women and girls from across times and cultures whose desire for knowledge transcends its challenges.

As 'escaping' means rejecting oppressive systems and getting safely out of painful or dangerous situations, this final contribution helps us envisage how writing, the arts, and the imaginative use of technology enable exiles, immigrants, refugees, and other expatriates to be free from detention and control, and free from an oppressive or irksome condition. Our collection, enriched by wide-ranging contributions by and about women, provides a refreshing escape from the realm of male-dominated interpretations. It engages readers and viewers in a performative set of experiences that often explode conventional order and introduce new modes of organizing understanding and inspiring possibilities. This work, placed at the end of our collection, offers itself as an opportunity to leave open the critical discussions on the subject of women and writing, the arts, and technologies, and to begin afresh by circulating new debates and dialogues once again, escaping – at least in this issue – a conclusive, categorical ending.

We would like to take leave by expressing our personal need and desire to negotiate between home and abroad – between a here, a there, and an elsewhere – which has enthused us to embark on an undetermined, but extremely enriching journey through different cultures, languages, stories, experiences, and dwellings. Having in mind Trinh T. Minh-ha's compelling study dedicated to exile and entitled *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event*, we believe that we have brought an array of multifaceted complexities within the 'here' of *Anglistica AION* and of ourselves (as editors, contributors, and the subjects of their analysis) to then bring the 'within here' elsewhere.[46] This alternating double movement – to the other and from the self, from the 'elsewhere' to a 'within here' and back again – is indeed the drive that characterizes the predicament of exile, its open wound and its embodiment of radical difference.

[44] Lynn Book, "Escapes", this issue, 213.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Trinh T. Min ha, "Other Than Myself, My Other Self", in *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* (New York: Routledge, 2011).