

II.

TRANSITIONS, TRANSGRESSIONS AND PERFORMANCE

INTRODUCTION | PART II

The papers in Part II are marked by the buzz words dominating English and American studies in recent years: *transnational*, *transversal*, *translational*, *transborder*, *transgressive* and so on, suggesting patterns of greater movement and exchange across disciplines, cultures, and languages. The articles in this thematic cluster discuss diverse forms of *transitions* and *transformations* in the humanities, employing the whole gamut of ambiguity of meanings behind the prefix *trans* such as “across,” “beyond,” “through,” and “changing thoroughly.”

The opening paper, **Arianna Dagnino's** *Translingual writing and bilingual self-translation as transcultural mediation*, demonstrates to a great extent the above-mentioned *trans*-orientation of systems of thought and research methods that encourages exploration of points of contact between cultures rather than points of attrition or oppositional thinking. Focusing on the self-translations of two translingual writers (ones who write in a language other than their mother tongue), the paper approaches the convergence of translation, transculturality and translingualism as a creative act of self-enrichment but also as a cultural mediation process.

In the next article, entitled *Translating affect: Performing the personal*, **Sneja Gunew** also turns attention to translation – in this case, the (un)translatability of sensations as something that lies outside language. By analysing the art of the Malayalam writer Kamala Das, the author proposes possible ways of making legible the gendered, linguistic and cultural specificity as constituting components of the personal in languages and cultures both familiar and less familiar.

From the affective capacities of the readers in a multilingual global world, the author of *New American theater in the age of Trump* directs our attention to the affective capacities of theatre viewers in today's America. More precisely, **Thomas Haskell Simpson** explores how the new generation of American playwrights try to puncture the bubble of American exceptionalism in the current age and deliberately create acoustic disorientation of spectators through figures of linguistic collapse and disorder, through the use of clashing voices, as well as impulsive and synchronous communication.

American drama is at the center of **Kornelia Slavova's** paper too. In *Translating 'race': Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes in Soviet and Post-Soviet era Bulgaria* she explores the cultural translation of racial otherness and its political implications in two

productions of Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* in Soviet and post-Soviet era Bulgaria, under two drastically different political regimes.

Yet another connection between the social and the artistic in cross-cultural performance is at the centre of **Boika Sokolova** and **Kirilka Stavreva**'s text *Two decades of Shakespeare in Bulgaria in the open theatre of a Bulgarian village*. The authors introduce the twenty-year old tradition of yearly Shakespeare performances in the Bulgarian village of Patalenitsa, which has fostered collaboration across divides of class, age, educational experience, language, and cultural background, serving as an antidote to the rampant consumerism and chalga mentality of Bulgarian post-communism.

Ralitsa Muharska also refers to the chalga phenomenon in post-communist Bulgaria in her analysis of the media discourses surrounding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. In *Chalga culture meets the Istanbul Convention: A Grotesque spectacle of masculinity*, she explains the failed ratification as a performance of political manipulation and a spectacle of excessive mug masculinity by seeking connections of chalga culture with its never-ending seduction into alienated amusement and consumption.

Emilia Slavova's paper *Translating gender, transgressing reason, and the misappropriation of Judith Butler in Bulgarian public discourse* continues the conversation about the anti-gender campaign related to the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. As her title suggests, the anti-gender hysteria signals a cultural shift in Bulgarian society towards parochial, conservative, anti-liberal, and anti-modern attitudes. This is why she calls for a more engaged, liberally-oriented approach to gender in higher education.

As if answering her plea, **Renate Haas**'s *Anglicist Women's and Gender Studies as a European discipline* emphasizes the transnational and transdisciplinary connections between English studies and Women's studies/gender studies, and especially the role of gender studies as "the driving force behind in the EU policy for equal opportunity for men and women."

The last four papers look at transgressive states and developments in film studies, TV culture, and folklore. For example, **Miglena Nikolchina**'s text entitled *On (not) wanting to be human: Man and robot*, focuses on paradoxical states and stages in the thinking of transhumanization. Referring to examples from mythology, fiction, film and video games, the author traces diverse forms of transitions in the very thinking of the human, pointing to indefiniteness and transgression as persistent traits of the concept of humanity.

In *Traditions of retirement in American life and literature*, **James Deutsch** continues along similar lines, introducing liminal stages in human existence as represented in American life and literature. More precisely, he focuses on traditions and rituals of retirement that reinforce notions of rebirth and reintegration in contrast to the retiree's receding or withdrawing from work.

The next text in the cluster again seeks symbolic meaning behind traditions and transitions, though it deals with the contemporary 2018 British-Irish television series *Derry Girls*. In *Obscure Irish English Dialogue and Hermetic Cultural Meaning in Lisa McGehee's Derry Girls*, **Jonathan McCreedy** attributes the enormous success of the series to

its usage of Derry/Londonderry English and the refusal to “translate” it into Standard English, which creates the show’s idiosyncratic style, hermetic cultural meaning, and a sense of authenticity.

Finally, in *“Fear Thy Neighbor”: Paranoia and suburban victimhood in Mark Pellington’s Arlington Road*, **Steffen Wöll** investigates the cinematic rendition of the deconstruction of a coherent suburban identity and subsequent dissolution of the Middle American reality principle. With cultural theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis in mind, he shows the ways social conventions of life in the suburbs are affected by and have contributed to the dissolution of a coherent Middle American identity.