

Marcelo J. Borges, Sonia Cancian, Linda Reeder (eds.), *Emotional Landscapes: Love, Gender, and Migration*

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The essays gathered in the volume *Emotional Landscapes: Love, Gender, and Migration*, edited by Marcelo J. Borges, Sonia Cancian, and Linda Reeder, give a valuable insight into the multifaceted migration experience imbued with emotions. Attending to subtle and variable affective languages, the authors “painted” compelling “emotional landscapes,” historically contingent and shaped transnationally by love and an array of other emotions accompanying people on the move, such as loss, nostalgia, hope, and joy. Love, gender, and migration are interwoven in all the narratives. Love as a driving force of migration, its meaning, the main bond overcoming distance, and an affective underpinning of public discourse pursuing political interests. Changeable in time and space, the meanings of love entail various ways of emotional expression and reshape gender norms.

The publication explores the affective dimension of mobility, aiming to unravel the dynamics between emotions, gender norms, and migrations in diverse spatial-temporal contexts from 1880 until the present day. The book’s asset stems undoubtedly from its methodological inspirations drawing on the “turn to experience,” which since the 1980s has decisively reconfigured the theoretical framework in the humanities. Putting emotion in the foreground as an analytic category enabled the authors to depict their protagonists as people from flesh and blood, torn by contradictory feelings and very often driven by irrational impulses.

All the essays provide new knowledge on various aspects of the migration experience. In his study of “transnational affect” between turn-of-the-century Portuguese migrants and their loved ones left behind, Marcelo J. Borges distinguished in their letters the recurring narratives of responsibility and sacrifice, which enabled separated families to make sense of their transnational life. Emotions expressed transnationally in correspondence reinforce the normative affective and gendered expectations of the society of origin and undergo decisive reconfigurations in accordance with the migration process in general and the host society in particular.

Letter-writing remains important in maintaining relationships in other spatial-temporal contexts. Suzanne M. Sinke presents the epistolary exchanges among one Jewish Viennese family in the mid-twentieth century as “the bedrock of emotional community” and an attempt to provide a certain sense of normality, continuity, and closeness abnormal and disruptive times of war (147). Each writer of letters, expressing some emotions and silencing others, performs certain roles prescribed for particular “epistolary personae” changing in time and relation to the audience.

Female migration was analyzed in several essays. María Bjerg, in her research based on criminal records, focuses on two stories of bigamy caused by spatial-temporal distance and shifting emotional landscapes in both societies of origin (Italy, Spain) and of arrival (Argentina). These stories show how migration imposes

on an individual a need to constantly “navigate among conflicting feelings” (49), emotional communities, values (erotic freedom or ties with the homeland implying certain responsibilities?), and orders of time (future-oriented assimilation or nostalgic yearning for the previous life?).

Mirjam Milharčič Hladnik also addresses female transoceanic mobility in her essay devoted to women’s labor migration from the Goriška region to Egypt in the interwar period. Milharčič Hladnik’s study of a separated couple’s long epistolary communication presents the narrative ways of renegotiating gender roles which allowed for maintaining ties and final reunification. By undermining prescribed gender norms, at the turn of the twentieth century, these migrating women, *Aleksandrinke*, found themselves between increased social control of the society of origin and lures of independence enabled by migration.

Margarita Dounia’s contribution also focuses on female transatlantic migration from Greece to Canada (Montreal) after World War II. Basing her research on oral history, Dounia argues that migration did not hinder the preservation of certain social practices and gender roles prevailing in Greece, such as arranged marriages. Still, it also allowed for their renegotiation, giving women more agency in deciding about partner or job. Migration was thus experienced, on the one hand, as a continuation of previous existential patterns and, on the other, as the processes making certain rearrangements of the normative framework of social life possible.

As Alexander Freund remarked in his essay, women perceived their migration very often as a “creative life strategy” (185) enabled not only by work but also by marriage. In his analysis of the post-World War II German emotional landscape, Freund addresses various competing affective languages pertaining to different actors: advocates of the old discourses nationally and racially underpinned which imposed social control on women and their sexuality (the church, the state, private organizations) and women themselves striving for more autonomy, in this case, to marry an American man.

What was the role of urban centers in shaping new meanings of love? Referring to urban literature and press, Tyler Carrington depicts the impact of the accelerated pace of life in turn-of-the-century Berlin and its demographic composition as the main factors defining “a new language of love” based on fate and fortuitous encounters. This alternate “individualistic approach to love” or “love at last sight” (Walter Benjamin) opposed the previous affective, normative ideas such as the one of respectability (76, 79). Berliners’ “new language of love” founded on fate depicts possible relationships between love and phenomena like urbanization and modernity. What was its relationship with nationalism?

Elizabeth Zanoni and Linda Reeder give some answers to this question. Zanoni explores the gendered concept of fraternal love between Italians and Argentines reconstructed based on the migrant publications, the press of the Italian diaspora in Argentina, and advertisements. This affective language of brotherly love (later during the Great War also sisterly love) becomes “an alternative lens for studying

the history of international relations between migrant-sending and -receiving countries" (91). In the analysis of the letters of Italian emigrants-soldiers during the Great War, Reeder addresses the issue of love of country equaled with familial love and founded on the gendered concept of Italian citizenship. Emotional landscapes shift in time, and thus, after the war, the emigrants' love of their country became disassociated from the notion of citizenship.

Emily Pope-Obeda shows how and why the press applied emotional language to the issue of the deportation regime in the United States (1919–1935). The sensationalized lens of tragic deportee love stories narrated in a highly unrepresentative manner served the newspapers to make sense of this expanding phenomenon in the United States. Deportation as a tool of social control was supposed to guard a certain normative image of sexuality and punish those whose acts were regarded as transgressing the "social conventions of love" (117).

Applying an "auto/biographical" approach to her research, Sonia Cancian tackles the issue of material and emotional meanings of separations for both mother and daughter in the contexts of post-World War II Italy and migration to Canada. Cancian accentuates the ambiguous meanings of the language of love regarded both as "a driver of migration and as a legitimizer of separation between mother and daughter" (165). These meanings were largely shaped in the "emotional community" of Fascist Italy, which emphasized the importance of the sacrificial aspect of maternal love.

A. James Hammerton's "Stories of Love and Marriage in the Modern British Diaspora" stems from the recent "mobility of modernity" characterized by mass travel, the better economic status of migrants, and "lifestyle migration" aimed at personal self-accomplishment (221–222). The author studies the changes in migrant experiences in the long timespan of half a century marked with the "shift from a postwar migration of austerity to a migration of prosperity" (222).

Roberta Ricucci analyzes the impact of the language of new media on intergenerational communication and the affective bonds among immigrant families of Moroccan and Peruvian origin in Turin, Italy. Eighty interviews with parents and children show new technology's disruptive effect on the affective ties in families weakened by an increasing mutual lack of understanding, distance, and alienation.

The stories collected in the volume pertain to migrants whose itineraries connected different parts of the world, Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Australia. Following their paths, the authors managed to provide a wide range of various "emotional landscapes." However, the Western European perspective, particularly the Italian, seems to be prevalent. As Donna R. Gabaccia underlined in her epilogue, "it is not at all clear that studies of migration, emotion, and nation-building around the Pacific or in Asian or African regions [...] would reveal similar transformations. On the contrary they might be expected to modify, reverse, or refute the narrative offered here" (266). The limited geographical scope of the study leaves many questions unanswered, inciting further research on

other parts of the world, which could considerably reshape the anthology's argument reframing it more globally.

One question emerges in this context regarding the migration experience of inhabitants of East-Central Europe, which in the anthology seems to be tackled only in two contributions (Milharčič Hladnik and Sinke), leaving aside other Slavic groups such as, for instance, the Polish diaspora, one of the largest in the world. The migrant experience of so many actors driven by the accelerated pace of historical changes and grand narratives such as fascism, war, communism in Central Europe would certainly reinforce the collection's comparative perspective and possibly also reshape the argument.

Potential enrichment also lies in a more careful contextualization by emphasizing emotions' social embeddedness and historical contingency and including more actors (also those acting transgressively). These enrichments could better expose the impact of the experience of mobility on migrants' complex, dynamic self-identifications, ambivalent in-betweenness (simultaneous being in places of origin and new destinations), ruptures, tensions, and reconfigurations of self in time and space.

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