

Minor Transnational Writing in Ireland

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Abstract: In her article "Minor Transnational Writing in Ireland" Borbála Faragó investigates the poetic work of some of Ireland's migrant writers through the lens of minor transnationalism. Ireland's peculiar migration history where there are two quite distinct groups of inward migrants, requires careful rethinking of terminology. Faragó proposes to circumnavigate the binary approach of investigating center versus periphery and instead look for lateral connections between marginalized groups. Reading the works of Ireland's internal others brings to the fore issues of authenticity, ethics, and identity that can foreground some of the ambiguities inherent in transnational studies today. Interpreting the oeuvre of these writers in terms of their migration narratives and what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih termed "minor transnationalism" can contribute to a better understanding of current cultural developments in transnationalism studies and the ways in which contemporary (im)migrants seek to articulate their positions within a cultural framework.

Borbála FARAGÓ

Minor Transnational Writing in Ireland

Literature written by migrants has been a focus of scholars of literature at least since the upheaval of de-colonization after the Second World War and the international trend towards globalization that ensued. Globalization has accelerated rapidly since the 1980s and 1990s, the era in which the term started to gain currency, driven by transformations of the global economic order and facilitated by ease and rapidity of travel and by the acceleration of innovations in technological communications. The political and economic changes brought about by globalization have resulted in large-scale population movements, and, particularly in Western Europe, a heightened sensitivity towards the cultural production of the "other." However, we still seem to struggle to provide precise definitions of literature produced by migrants, often called "migrant writing" or "immigrant writing" and how best to read it. The starting point of this essay therefore is that there is always a starting point. The global does not necessarily preclude the local or the national: there is a place of writing, a place of publishing and of readership, and places referenced within the works. However, these literatures still resist definition by the national, because national canons are developed on the foundation of what Mads Rosendahl Thomsen identified as the triangular unity of history, language, and literature (2). Thomsen argues that one or more of these concepts tend to become disrupted in the cultural outputs of dislocated writers, as this essay will attempt to demonstrate through the discussion of a selection of poems written by migrants in Ireland.

Another key point of discussion I engage with in my study are identity markers inherent in terminology itself. I advocate the use of a terminology that focuses more on the transnational aspect of the literature in question in order to escape a narrowly biographical approach. Indeed, "transnational literature" along with "transcultural literature" and "world literature" are often put forward as alternative terms to that of "migrant writing," which tends to focus too much on the biography of the writer (see, e.g., Faragó; Sturm-Trigonakis). Victor Rudometof notes that the term "transnational" migrated from an economic context into international relations in the 1970s and thence into sociological criticism in the 1990s (313-15). Paul Jay's 2010 *Global Matters* on what he calls "the transnational turn in literary studies" is about the concept from a literary perspective and as a phenomenon that arose from the intersection of colonialism, decolonization, migration, and globalization. In his introduction, Jay suggests that one of the most valuable aspects of transnationalism is its re-evaluation of notions of center and periphery. I demonstrate the validity of such a perspective by focusing on the notion of "minor transnationalism" as conceived by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih in their 2005 volume *Minor Transnationalism*.

While some critics prefer the term "transcultural" to "transnational," the terms are often interchangeable, and can sometimes encompass the notion of world literature (see, e.g., Dagnino). What is most important about these sometimes interchangeable and often porous terms is that they are open to all kinds of literature written anywhere regardless of national origin. In his 2003 book *What is World Literature?* David Damrosch argues (as summarized by Thomsen) that while the term "world literature" can be applied to all literature that circulates beyond its culture of origin, it is more profitably understood as a mode of reading, rather than a set canon of texts (Thomsen 15-16). This is a helpful definition when it comes to discussing writing by migrants, since interpretation is too often caught up in the dialectic of places of origin and destination, rather than a mode of reading that looks beyond this duality. I understand the Irish national literary canon as the dominant center of distribution and valuation of the literary work produced in Ireland. However, migrant writing produced in Ireland fits into an in-between space that interacts with at least two national canons and also the collective body of transnational literature. Such literature speaks from a place between cultures. In Thomsen's definition, migrant literature gives a foreign voice to local material (61). This perspective certainly applies to the body of work to be discussed in this article.

As noted above, migrant writing is primarily defined by the author's biography (he/she resides in a space conceptualized as an "other" in relation to the place of origin), and therefore migrant writing is often seen as presenting a voice that is not at home. However, this definition can prove somewhat problematic, since it is based on a binary thinking between center and periphery and ignores the issues of cosmopolitan privilege in relation to access to publishing. These problems certainly became manifest in 2009, when the German-Irish poet Eva Bourke and I sent out a call for submissions to a proposed anthology of migrant poetry, which was later published by Dedalus Press. Founded in 1985 by Irish poet John F. Deane, Dedalus Press has always been marked by a wish to extend conceptions of Irish writing and is open to other cultures beyond the remit of traditionally Irish concerns, like Joyce's character of the same name. It seeks to promote contemporary poetry in general, including writing from other countries and non-established writers. In our call for submissions, we asked poets from other countries living in Ireland and writing in English to send us poems for possible inclusion in the anthology. We encouraged submissions from a broad field, including those who were born outside Ireland and came to live here and those who were born here but had parents, or one parent, born elsewhere. The anthology was intended to reflect the increasing diversity of cultural life in Ireland and to give all those who self-defined as immigrants in such a way an opportunity to showcase their distinctive contribution to contemporary Irish literature, as well as to celebrate their difference at the same time.

We received well over a hundred submissions from approximately 25 different nationalities. We decided to include 66 poets from 19 different backgrounds, ranging from Anglophone to non-European poets. Early on we made a conscious decision that representation of diversity would only be a secondary factor when choosing the poets to be included, and that instead our personal preferences for the individual poems would drive our selection process. However, we naturally ran into difficulties about delineating who is an immigrant and who is not ("immigrant" was a term the publisher chose for marketing

purposes arguing for ease of recognition for a potential audience). In the end, diversity was represented not only through the geographical spread of countries of origin, but also through publishing histories: some poets, like Chris Agee, Theodore Deppe, Ursula Rani Sarma, or Sabine Wichert, to mention just a few, were well established poets, while others, like Emmanuel Oritsegbemi Jakpa or Kinga Olszewska were relative newcomers with no publishing history within Ireland. We chose two to four poems per poet, concentrating on aesthetic quality and some relevance to the topic of migration, where possible. We were interested, and somewhat surprised to see the diversity of people who identified themselves as "immigrants" with ease: many of the poets who applied had established lives in Ireland and would not have been labelled "immigrant" in everyday parlance. For this reason, it seemed important to unravel the meaning behind the vocabulary commonly used to denote migrancy. As noted above, "migrant writing" is perhaps the most commonly used term to denote verbal works of art whose authors have undergone a major cultural and, in most cases, linguistic shift. But what is migrant literature from an Irish perspective? I contend that Ireland's history of inward migration—where there are significant numbers of middle class white English-speaking migrants (often originating from the United Kingdom or North America or other places of Irish diaspora)—somewhat reconfigures thematic expectations in literature. In this context not only the term "migrant" is problematized, but also "migrant writing" or "migrant literature" and then there is the further complication relating to "immigrant" literature.

It is also important to mention the delimiting effect of anthologizing migrant writers. Many have argued that the creation of such anthologies encourage the reduction of migrant writing to so called "minority literature." This is a familiar issue in relation to women's writing. The act of rendering these writers visible as migrants is also in a sense an act of violence which exposes their personal experiences to scrutiny: are they migrant enough? There is also a very real danger that the conceptualization of migrancy in these terms reinforces the idea that normative nationalism does not need re-thinking, since migrants remain conspicuously outside the remit of national discourse. Creating migrant anthologies thus can reinforce "othering," rather than dialogue. Of course, all systems of inclusion are necessarily systems of exclusion. However, the aim of our anthology was explicitly less to offer representation and more to tell stories in whichever poetic form they emerged. Migrants are sometimes politically problematized and in a sense our anthology sought to counterbalance this by rendering the unfamiliar familiar and humanizing lived experiences, as far as poetry is able to do so. By deciding to include English language poems only (with the exception of a couple of poems written in Gaelic) we also restricted representation. The practical reason for this was lack of funding for translators, but also a curiosity to display poetic appropriations of Hiberno-English, and to allow other dialects of English to interact with Irish readers.

Following its publication, the review of *Landing Places* in the *Irish Times* commended the book for "not locking us up in our little nations" and yet criticized it for giving English-speaking poets too much coverage ... although both editors themselves are resident aliens [*sic*], they favour poetic modes that will be familiar to most poetry readers in Ireland." He further stated that "instead of ... work by American poet Ted Deppe I would have preferred to hear more from the likes of Nyaradzo Masunda, who was born in Zimbabwe and now lives in Cork" (Quinn <<http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/outside-on-the-inside-1.640794>>). The reviewer, Justin Quinn, in a way embodies widespread attitudes towards migrancy in Ireland. His opening question: "what does an alien see" immediately establishes the process of othering which assumes a homogeneous "outsider's" viewpoint. In an Irish context, the (im)migrant is often portrayed as victim or transgressor, or superficially celebrated for his/her exoticism and cultural difference. This raises another question: to what extent is a poet marked by an identity descriptor responsible for speaking for this identity? There is, in my opinion, a danger that audience expectations towards the migrant to report on his/her migrant experience might reinforce preconceptions about useful versus non-useful migrants in terms of the ethical and political relevance of the creative output. The question of labels of identity raises the issue of how best to read the texts in *Landing Places*. It seems to me that in order to understand and appreciate the diversity of migrant cultural production in Ireland we need to gain a better understanding of peripheral migrancy by which I mean migrations which do not conform to a stereotype of movement from a marginal, minority position to a majority center. Although Ireland's history of migration has been characterized by volatile changes, attitudes towards (im)migrants have been much slower to change. For the majority of (im)migrant writers publishing in Ireland, Irishness was an assumed attribute: in anthologies Irish ancestry and other Irish connections are emphasized above "foreign" ties. As such, in the Irish context the terms "migrant" and "migrant literature" are problematized because of the predominant invisibility of White English-speaking (im)migrants and the exoticizing visibility of the newer wave of (im)migrants of color. (Im)migrant literature in Ireland is, in many circles, assumed to consist solely of life-stories of refugees and asylum-seekers and there are few attempts to highlight continuity between the literary outputs of these two groups. One of the reasons for this is of course the reluctance to question the metonymical relationship between language and nation and also a defensive tendency to fetishize the "stranger" as fundamentally, and unthreateningly, "other." I argue that *Landing Places* functions as a site for communication between and across minorities, where all (im)migrant writers are considered outsiders in some way even if some of them appear to be close to the center, because of their place of origin, linguistic background, or publishing history.

Lionnet's and Shih's *Minor Transnationalism* suggests that theories of transnationalism tended to focus on a binary and solely vertical perspective moving within the parameters of power, center, and periphery, thus marginalizing and potentially ignoring various types of transnational cultural productions. A minor transnationalist reading, on the other hand, allows for lateral theorizing where diverse manifestations of transnational identities can be acknowledged as creative interventions within this discourse. While dominant discourses of transnationalism tend to stay within the binary model of above

and below, Lionnet and Shih argue for a need for a new emphasis on the micropractices of transnationality that demonstrate, as they say, "multiple, paradoxical, or even irreverent relations with the economic transnationalism of contemporary empires" (7). They claim that prevalent theories of transnationalism tend to valorize the most dominant and the most resistant, and that such theories assume that minorities always engage with and against majority cultures in a vertical relationship of opposition or assimilation (7). Lionnet and Shih argue for a horizontal communication amongst minorities and call for lateral thinking in this matter—an aspiration *Landing Places* attempted to facilitate. Their main argument is that when scholarship engages with the relationships among different margins, rather than the center and the margin (2), we gain a better understanding of the general logic of transcultural and transdisciplinary approaches and this discourse can also trouble prevalent notions of transnationalism as a homogenizing force (5). Lionnet and Shih argue that transnationalism can in fact offer a space of exchange, a possibility, where cultures can interact without necessary mediation by a center (5). Their term "minor transnationalism" denotes transversal movements of culture that includes minor cultural articulations in productive relationship with the major, as well as minor to minor networks that circumvent the major altogether (8). While others have written about postnational identities (see, e.g., Matustik) or nomadic identities (see, e.g., Braidotti; Deleuze and Guattari), Lionnet and Shih stress that minor transnational subjects, rather than being free-floating signifiers, are invested in their respective geopolitical spaces (8). Their theory of minor transnationalism also assumes, significantly, that cultures are always hybrid and relational, rather than pure entities (9). Next, I analyze migrant Irish poetry from this minor transnational perspective by looking at some poems written by Eva Bourke and two poets whose work appeared in *Landing Places* (Emmanuel Oritsegbemi Jakpa and Landa Wo).

"Swifts" by Eva Bourke from her 2011 collection, *piano*, is an example of a poem where horizontal communication among minorities appears within an Irish context. Bourke, who chose to leave Germany for Ireland in the 1970s, is representative of poets whose presence in the anthology seemed to trouble Justin Quinn so much. As a White middle class woman with perfect English and an Irish name (that of her Irish husband), Bourke gained considerable visibility as an Irish poet. While her poetry has been interpreted within a nationalist discourse, it is rarely read within the discourse of trans-European movement. Yet, while she does not always attribute a personal experience of migration to her speakers explicitly, her poetry is populated with migrant "messages" that reach out to her audience. Like a globalized wanderer or perhaps a contemporary *flâneuse*, she situates her poems across the globe in different cities and urban environments (*piano* references German and Turkish cities, for example). Her poetic identity is cosmopolitan and international, showing what in her poem "Swifts" she calls "mordents of farewell" (*piano* 24), reaching across cultures. "Swifts" is set in a bland Irish suburban locality that positions her both within an Irish narrative and in a personal context of migrancy. In the poem, the migrating birds of the grey autumnal day sing a song whose contents remain mysterious but are understood by the speaker. Interestingly, the suburban non-migrant Irish neighbor appears to reduce the birdsong to a song of farewell, perhaps an indication that she does not personally understand its complexities, but perhaps *also* as a comment on the long Irish connection with emigration. Despite the apparent blandness of the surroundings, there is a subtle inscription of Irishness in the poem, as the reference to migrating birds calls up such key Irish texts as Yeats's wild swans or Joyce's departing birds in *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. The very title evokes Jonathan Swift, another migrant poet who made a life in Ireland. Yet it is just as important to note that the poem creates a space that emphasizes the lateral movement of empathy between minor subjectivities (those of the birds and of Bourke's poetic persona as migrant writer).

In another poem, "Notes From Henry Street: With Apologies to Montale" (*piano* 71-72) Bourke references the poem "Su una lettera non scritta" by Eugenio Montale, the 1975 Nobel Prize laureate. The titles of several of Montale's collections are connected to the sea (*Ossi di Seppi* (1925), *La Casa dei doganeri et altre poesie* (1932), and *Finisterre* (1943) where "Su una lettera non scritta" first appeared. Montale's poem is about isolation, loneliness, and the futility of communication where nature, with almost a cruel disregard for humans, just goes on living, even at "Finisterre" the "end of the land." The poem describes a person looking at the sea lamenting that time goes on even without his love. In Bourke's poem, a speaker also writing near the sea, but in an Irish context (Henry Street in Galway City), remembers a loved one whose photo adorns her wall, who is absent in a unspecified location, and to whom she writes. Bourke introduces industrial pollution and waste into her poem as if these also had a life of their own and disregarding everything around them:

Gales that played wild and loose all night
with rubbish in the street and flung plastic
forks like confetti round the garden have died
away to the hum of Astras and Toyotas on wet tarmac.
There are worm-eaten floorboards in my room
and from the kitchen comes the smell of burning
toast. Non-stop rain blows in from the sea
along this street of Club Paradiso, sex shop
plus blackjack club, drifts past FOR SALE signs, past
the latest apartment block's rain-black walls,
silvering my window with salt,
and I write to you from this remote table. (71)

In a frightening way pollution becomes nature, with its own uncontrollable laws, taking over human life. Bourke seems to draw a parallel between natural and man-made atrophy (the rubbish is like the worms eating the floorboards, the slug-slime and mold seem to correspond to the human moral decay of the sex-shop), and the life-narrative's "bluster" of the speaker seems to recall the "gales" and "rain" of

nature. The poem seems to imply that human life is subservient to the forces of nature and pollution, taking humanity to "land's end," but the only thing that is above this, is communication, or love. Montale's letter never gets written, the bottle never reaches the other person, but in Bourke's poem there is a human encounter through the smile lighting up the room, which seems to be the only beam of light shining through: "These days as I consider the narrative / of my life are full of bluster and no chance / of an escape to gentler zones in sight. / Your photo's on my wall—your smile lights / up my room. It's pouring hard from here to Finisterre" (71). Although there is nothing explicit in the poem to suggest that the speaker is a migrant, Bourke's own migrant sensibility arguably allows her to step beyond the dichotomy of local (Galway's Henry Street) and global (the factories and perhaps sweatshops that produced the plastic forks) by creating a poetic space where the love for another human being, the desire to communicate, and an ethics of care become the most significant issues. Indeed, the primary way of making sense of the migrant life experience may lie in the creation of what Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* termed a "third space": a site of in-betweenness where the heightened poetic senses map and create the environment. In this new context empathic allusion and communication come to the fore: "Memories return nocturnally, sere and raw. Ivy / spreads on partition walls, a dark bitter smell. Tonight, / my footsteps resounding on the pavement, / I wish, as you then did, for gales to return, northerly / and more savage than before, to lash through narrow lanes / sweep clear the hopeful, uncertain mind" (72). The line "sweep clear the hopeful, uncertain mind" epitomizes what might be termed a characteristically (im)migrant attitude where communication and understanding are contingent upon emotionality and an unconditional acceptance of idiosyncrasy.

Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa takes a different stance in his poem "Harmattan," a poetic response to the Nobel Prize winning Irish poet, Seamus Heaney's probably most famous poem "Digging," the first poem in his debut collection, *Death of a Naturalist*. Jakpa is a more recent immigrant to Ireland: originally from Nigeria he arrived in the early 2000s. "Harmattan" raises many questions about experience and memory in the context of migration. While the title recalls an African meteorological phenomenon (the harmattan wind), the text itself is a dialogue with Irish literary canon, signaling in the dedication that it is written "After Heaney." The word "after" is interesting here, alluding not only to the process of literary assimilation of Ireland's artistic forebears, but also to the notion of a free translation/incorporation of something, and importantly to temporal distance, setting the context as in some way the New Ireland, as well as the travails of the abandoned homeland, where the African digger has perhaps remained.

Hugo Hamilton, one of Ireland's most acclaimed writers of fiction and who displays a strikingly migrant sensibility, introduced Jakpa's work at the launch of *Landing Places*. Hamilton, who is perhaps best known for his 2003 novel *The Speckled People* where the young narrator's childhood is marked by a German mother and an ardently Irish father like Hamilton's own, introduced Jakpa's poem with these words: "Perhaps the clearest example of [the] immigrant gaze comes from the African poet Oritsegbemi Emmanuel Jakpa ... Jakpa has taken it upon himself to rewrite one of the most famous poems ever written by any Irish writer. No Irish person would dare rewrite the poem 'Digging' by Seamus Heaney. For us, Heaney has done digging and we cannot attempt to improve on that wonderful connection between the spade and the pen in the hand of the writer. Only a newcomer to Ireland could have the inspiration and the audacity to write a cover version of such a cultural landmark and to add a new depth of meaning which may not have been available to us in the original poem." Jakpa's poem thus becomes relational to Irishness and migration. It is not simply an intertextual exploration of Heaney's *ars poetica* but also, and more significantly, a reflection on memory and trauma. This works on two levels: first, the Heaney reference contextualizes the poem within Irish cultural memory, and second, the African references recall personal traumatic past experiences. The traumatic events that the poem alludes to (time spent in Kirikiri prison, friends disappearing, not being able to leave Africa and then the tribulation of migration) surface in the context of the Heaney poem, reinterpreting ideas of identity and belonging. Heaney's rural, melancholy father figure is replaced by the African "digger" who thinks about "the years he spent in Kirikiri prison" and "his friends who disappear like methylated spirit." Jakpa's spade at the end of the poem is angry and vengeful and evokes the inevitability of migrant suffering. The second part of the poem focuses on the construction of this exilic identity: "The logic of existence / replants us in alien soil. / We tear around the hairpin / corners of the world, divided to the vein: / to stay put or to go" (74).

Jakpa captures the political and economic pressures exerted on forced migrants and offers a perspective in this poem which observes Irishness dialogically, as it were. The connection between host and home is made through literary allusion and by a careful re-interpretation of artistic purpose. Heaney says "I have no spade to follow men like them" and so concludes his poem with the famous lines "Between my finger and my thumb / the squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it" (74). Jakpa's speaker however becomes a "watcher" of the "intimate vengeance" of the digger and the harmattan, and rather than appropriating these as metaphors of artistic creation, he identifies with and internalizes the experience of pain and fissures of exile represented by the destruction caused by the spade, as he concludes his poem with the lines: "My pen, my spade. / I'll crack with it. / Dig with it" (74). In his introduction of Jakpa, Hamilton claimed that the poet has given "a new depth of meaning" to Heaney's poem through his immigrant "gaze" and he calls this work a "new phase of Irish writing which is like a blood transfusion." However, it might be argued that the construction (or re-construction) of Irishness is completely tangential to the construction of migrant identity in this work and, instead, Jakpa's focus is the internal pain and fractures suffered by forced migrants. Rather than an improvement of Heaney's poem, "Harmattan" could even be read as a fundamental disavowal of an Irish sense of inherited identity. The turning of the soil is not about excavating the "good turf" but rather a painful revisiting of the fear and the feeling of "checkmate" experienced by Africans who are forced to leave their country. Harmattan, which gives the poem its title, is a sight-blurring red dusty wind which blows all over Africa. Maybe the

real metaphor of this poem is not the act of digging and its implications for Irishness, but the merciless wind which throws around migrants like "dust."

Landa Wo was born in France of Angolan descent, but had been forced to leave his native country and ended up spending over twenty years as an exile in Gabon and Congo before he moved to Ireland during the early 2000s. His short poem "Behind Tara Hill" infuses traumatic memories in the settings of Irish cultural memory. The standing stones of Tara hills in Ireland were said to open the way only for the rightful king, while the others drove their chariots into them, finding immediate death. Tara is a site of celebration but also of destruction and burial, which is acknowledged in the dedication of Wo's poem which reads "To the dead of the hills" (220). Traumatic memory is invoked in this poem as fragments in the present. However, the present moment is imbued with the cultural memory of trauma:

All the hills in the world
Keep terrible secrets.
When mankind lost his mind
In the swift killing of innocents,
This refugee boy left his home
With no other hope
Than to find his mother spirit
Behind Tara Hill.
I can still remember
The breath of his agony
In the early killing hours
Of this fresh Irish winter.
Every dead of the hills
From stomachs of wild animals
Seems to murmur to the boy:
Find our soul behind Tara Hill
And join us for a drink. (220)

In this way, the "breath of agony" of the boy becomes inseparably linked to the "terrible secrets" of Tara hills. The perspective of the speaker thus remains linked to the immediacy and rawness of pain: there is no safe haven of a present where from remembering can happen. Rather, the personal becomes cultural and the cultural becomes personal. On the micro level of the individual we empathize with the lost "refugee boy" whose agony is unhealed and still smarting in the "killing hours of this fresh Irish winter". On the macro level, we gain an insight into the social and cultural aspects of trauma memory, which is invoked by the archeological site of Tara hill and the hinted at atrocities of "the swift killing of innocents." The poem creates a link between the souls of the Irish dead and the traumatized refugee boy. The act of remembering remains a frightening process which threatens to devour (from the stomachs of wild animals) the boy, and also us, the readers. What makes this poem so poignant is that it is not a closed narrative of persecution resolved by redemption, but rather, it portrays the continuous intrusion of pain and suffering through the act of remembering.

The poems by Bourke, Jakpa, and Wo interact in different ways with the dominant discourses of national literatures. These poets trouble the binary status quo of center and periphery not because of their liminality, but because of their close literary and intertextual relationship with the center. Eva Bourke, as a European, voluntary migrant whose literary output has been assimilated within the contemporary Irish national canon, writes cosmopolitanism into her work (here, particularly in the Henry Street poem) as well as a nuanced reflection on assimilation, as is clear from "Swifts." Jakpa challenges the hegemony of assumed canonicity, while Wo reflects on the shared historical suffering of all insiders and outsiders alike. Reading the works of these poets gives weight to the idea of transversal connections, whether the author is closely aligned to a dominant center or not, or chooses to write about that center or not.

In conclusion, minor transnational literatures identify with otherness and difference and occupy a space of in-betweenness that re-interprets ideas of nationhood, language, locality, and identity. What I call Ireland's peripheral migrancies or migrations do not conform to a stereotype of movement from a marginal, minority position to a majority center. When ethnic and linguistic boundaries become blurred (for example with the many ethnicities and usages of English, and in some case Irish Gaelic, that make up the writing in *Landing Places*), this can challenge and subvert not only conceptualizations of national canons, but also dominant discourses of migration where minorities come to occupy a space within a majority culture. Reading the works of Ireland's internal others brings to the fore issues of authenticity, ethics and identity that can foreground some of the ambiguities inherent in transnational studies today. Interpreting the oeuvre of these writers in terms of their migration narratives and minor transnationalism can contribute to a better understanding of current cultural developments in transnationalism studies, and the ways in which contemporary migrants seek to articulate their positions within a European cultural framework.

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