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Kate Averis and Isabel Hollis-Troué, eds., *Exiles, Travellers and Vagabonds: Rethinking Mobility in Francophone Women's Writing*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016. xiv + 272 pp. Bibliography and index. £95.00 (hb). ISBN 978-1-7831-6928-3.

Review by Régine Michelle Jean-Charles, Boston College.

Exile and migration have long been recognized as central tropes in francophone studies. Whether it is the trajectory from the former colony to the metropole, or the forced exile from one's native land, nostalgic longing for the homeland while in the host land, or the displacement from the village to an urban environment, francophone writers regularly reflect on how various forms of movement shape identities. In this new collection of essays edited by Kate Averis and Isabel Hollis-Touré, the authors organize their study around the more fluid concept of mobility as an animating force in the work of contemporary francophone women writers. More so than the title, the subtitle is especially instructive for the reader. *Exiles, Travellers and Vagabonds: Rethinking Mobility in Francophone Women's Writing* features a collection of essays that rework the idea of mobility as it operates in literary studies, francophone studies, and gender studies. As the editors state in the introduction, "Underlying this volume is the assertion that women's identities are irrevocably altered, if not constituted by the fact and experience of mobility" (p. 9). Put differently, the essays in this volume address the question: what happens when the mobile subject is female?

The book is divided into three parts with an afterword as the conclusion. Part one, "Familial Frames, Transnational Tropes," begins with the essay "Strangers in their Own Homes: Displaced Women in Léonora Miano's *L'Intérieur de la nuit* and *Contours du jour qui vient*" by Isabel Hollis-Touré. This first chapter argues for a broader interpretation of the notion of estrangement and how it figures in literary analyses about displaced people. Hollis-Touré immediately challenges widely held notions about displacement by pointing out that "a key characteristic of women's writing of mobility is the manner in which their societal displacement may precede their physical displacement" (p. 19). In other words, departure does not always result in estrangement but it is a product of someone having been estranged. She goes on to point out that "women [are often] estranged not because of their choice to leave, but because they are women. Women may not simply be strangers to themselves, but more precisely strangers in their homes" (p. 19). Central to her analysis of how mobility functions in Miano's first two novels is how home and displacement operate in relation to one another. According to Hollis-Touré, Miano disturbs narrow conceptions of home by demonstrating what occurs when home becomes a space of estrangement and non-belonging. This nuancing of home and refusal to mark it as a romantic and fetishized space captures the experience of the protagonists in both novels. This view allows us to see the ways in which the concept of home occurs "both through and within displacement" for "Miano's mobile women" (pp. 20, 30).

Similarly, in "Gendering Migrant Mobility in Fatou Diome's Novels" Christopher Hogarth focuses on female migration—both its causes and consequences—for characters throughout Diome's corpus, which ranges from 2001 to 2013. Hogarth attributes Diome's "unique rethinking of mobility" to an attention

to how gender operates within the deeply entrenched migration narrative that has characterized male-authored novels from Francophone West Africa (p. 55). In Diome's work, we find women who migrate as a result of marriage and marital strife, women who send money back to assist their families and dissuade other family members from coming to France, women who take on menial labor and those who, too proud, refuse to do so. These distinctions are a key part of Diome's intervention—"Diome's depiction of women migrating for reasons beyond the pursuit of Western education marks a contribution to a discourse on transnational mobility in Senegalese women's writing" (p. 56). Moving from Diome's first novel to her most recent novel to date Hogarth carefully outlines a trajectory from privileging mobility for female characters to demonstrating the ambiguity that can surround migration as well as an "unwillingness to make Europe an easy home for female characters" (p. 68). For Hogarth, a pronounced dialectic between mobility and immobility marks Diome's work, opening a space for her to critique migration and foreground the role of outcasts.

In part two, "Rewriting Identities as Displaced Subjects" the authors are equally concerned with the role of outcasts and marginalized protagonists, albeit this time organized around the idea of exile. Jane Hiddleston's essay "Reappropriating 'Exile'? Transculturality between Word and Image in Leïla Sebbar's *Mes Algéries en France*" continues the task of rethinking mobility by interrogating how the central trope of exile figures in the work of Algerian writer Leïla Sebbar. Through an analysis of literary and visual texts, Hiddleston argues that Sebbar habitually uncovers the "legacy of antagonism between France and Algeria" (p. 113). Hiddleston contends that a close reading of the relationship between text and image in *Mes Algéries en France* reveals a subtext of loss, fracture, and alienation that contradicts the straightforward construction of transcultural identity in Sebbar's previous work. For Hiddleston, "the clash between word and image [occurs so] that each signals the other's limitation" (p. 124). The fraught relationship between visual and written registers as they appear in the collection help to unmask Sebbar's "very unease around the representational forms associated with commemorating the dual history" of France and Algeria (p. 126). While the essay offers a penetrating analysis of the importance of visual culture in general and specifically the photographic image in the representation of exile, it would have benefited significantly from the inclusion of the actual photographs to further enhance the points made throughout. Just as Hiddleston notes that "Sebbar's images too seem to generate more questions than answers," the reader leaves the essay with more questions about what these images actually look like on the page (p. 128).

The final essay in this section focuses on the non-fiction work of Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat, thus delving into a geographic area unexamined in the previous essays. In "Restarting the Stopped Clock of Time: Rethinking Mobility in Edwidge Danticat's Non-Fiction," Bonnie Thomas argues that Danticat deploys a strategy of "literary collage" in her work in order to weave together narratives that are personal and political, individual and collective, historically-minded and rooted in the contemporary. The essay begins by situating Danticat in the context of the Francophone Caribbean and proposes that "Danticat's use of English...constitutes an important tool to create meaningful connections between her differing lived experiences" (p. 173). Thomas's interest in how Danticat is able to "unsettle the way we think about physical and imaginary mobility and to redefine our relationship to the past" focuses on *After the Dance*, *Brother I'm Dying*, and *Create Dangerously*, each of which occupies a different genre of non-fiction (travel writing, memoir, and essay respectively) (p. 173). Ultimately Thomas concludes that "mobility in Danticat's non-fictional oeuvre is a far-reaching concept that crosses geographical, political, historical and imaginative boundaries" (p. 185). While the chapter is careful in its readings of Danticat's work, throughout her discussion Thomas returns to the idea of weaving "the personal and political," an idea that has resonance in feminist analysis yet is never explicitly defined. Thus, the essay would have benefited from a greater excavation of the implications of the personal and the political.

The third and final part of the book, "Future Directions in Women's Mobility," begins with another essay about Haitian literature, Charles Forsdick's "Mobility, Motility, Gender: Travelling Haiti." The

essay is a compelling analysis of “post-earthquake” novels by Kettly Mars and Yanick Lahens that use Danticat’s “call for authors to bear witness to questions of (im)mobility and (in)stability, and to interrogate the frictions of differential mobilities” as a point of departure (p. 197). By looking at three authors who “regularly focus on those Haitians not necessarily subject to the challenges of migration, but whose mobility is nevertheless seriously curtailed at home,” Forsdick shifts our attention from mobility as a sign of migration and immigration to the question of internal mobility and non-mobility in the Francophone world (p. 192). Central to Forsdick’s argument is the concept of motility elaborated by sociologist Mimi Sheller and defined as “the manner in which an individual or group appropriates the field of possibilities relative to movement and uses them” (p. 197). This focus on the “tensions between mobility and motility” in the context of Lahens’s and Mars’s protagonists helps to further illuminate “the complex mobilities of post-earthquake Haiti” (p. 209).

Another chapter in this section, “Ectopic Literature: The Emergence of a New Transnational Literary Space in Europe in the Works of Eva Almassy and Rouja Lazarova,” establishes an alternative framework for reading contemporary novels. Margarita Alfaro identifies “a new space of transnational literary creation” that transcends borders and that she terms “ectopic literature or literature written extra-territorially” (p. 233). Concerned with political and ideological exile, she focuses on Eva Almassy and Rouja Lazarova because they “belong to this second generation of intellectuals who argue in favour of the freedom of expression quashed by these [totalitarian] regimes” (p. 235). Throughout this chapter, Alfaro makes a case for “a new female modernity that recognizes the importance of the relationship between the individual and democracy and seeks to rebuild a society where all individuals benefit from the given social environment” (p. 233). She concludes that authors like Almassy and Lazarova who are writing in an adopted language actively create a new literary paradigm that highlights “the intercultural, multilingual and plural reality we live in at the start of the twenty-first century” (p. 246). Of the essays in volume, the structure of Alfaro’s coheres most seamlessly with its comparative scope because, rather than treat each text separately, she explores them together according to three different themes.

The book ends with a thoughtful afterword by Mildred Mortimer who reflects on various meanings of home as a point of departure for rethinking mobility. Mortimer rightfully acknowledges the “multiplicity of diverse voices” and “different generational perspectives” offered within its pages, which this reader found to be one of the strengths of the collection (p. 251). This collection of essays will be of interest to students and researchers in the fields of francophone literary studies, women and gender studies, migration studies, and diaspora studies. One of the collection’s greatest contributions is how it pushes against, or issues a challenge to the field of diaspora studies helping to demonstrate that certain key terms—homeland/hostland, migration, displacement, deterritorialization—coalesce more robustly under a framework that focuses on mobility and does not exclusively foreground movement as from margin to center, from native land to metropole, from local to global, or from colonized to colonizer. Rather, what *Exiles, Travellers and Vagabonds* demonstrates is that rethinking mobility generates new questions for francophone literary studies, postcolonial studies, and francophone studies to take seriously as they move beyond binaristic constructions of identity in the twenty-first century.

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Mildred Mortimer, “Afterword: Women on the Move”

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