

Milena Kaličanin and Soňa Šnircová, eds.

***Representations of the Local in the
Postmillennial Novel: New Voices
from the Margins***

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The experience of living in a globalised world has become one of the major preoccupations in contemporary fiction, resulting in a number of literary works which treat this theme with acute awareness of the way in which the globalising processes may affect local identities and discourses. As Milena Kaličanin and Soňa Šnircová, the editors of this volume, point out, the questions about the relationship between the local and the global are not only the subject of literary representations, but are likewise raised in a wider social and cultural context. On the one hand, globalisation has led to the emergence of “global identity”, implying cosmopolitan attitudes and one’s identification with all humankind; on the other, the pressures of globalisation have given new impetus to regionalism – which, as Kaličanin and Šnircová argue, may be a reaction to “the increased awareness of the dangers of social atomism and disembeddedness that affect humanity in the globalised world” (Kaličanin and Šnircová 2). As opposed to global tendencies, local identity is based on an emotional attachment to a particular physical place and a sense of belonging to a community; such identifications, however, are increasingly difficult to maintain in the postmillennial world. These complex circumstances, and the concomitant identity crisis, have become the focal point of numerous novelistic representations, which are discussed in the papers collected in this book. The broad theoretical framework for the book is based on the research conducted within the Slovakian state-funded project *The Global and the Local in Postmillennial Anglophone Literatures, Cultures and Media*. In addition, the contributors have used a variety of specific theoretical approaches in their papers, such as postcolonial, altermodernist, linguistic, comparative, and diasporic.

The collection opens with an insightful and well-researched introductory essay written by Kaličanin and Šnircová. The authors astutely point out that “globalisation does not wipe out the dynamics of the centre/margin tensions” which was characteristic of the early imperialist era; on the contrary, it appears to produce “new voices from the margins that are often overshadowed by new centres” (Kaličanin and Šnircová 3). Such voices in the postmillennial novel may be marginalised for a variety of reasons – because they belong to ethnic minorities living in contemporary metropolises, or because the authors in question tend to focus on national, regional or local concerns, as opposed to the more universal ones which would have appealed to a wider audience. The appearance of these new margins, and the tension between global and local discourses in postmillennial literature, have come to constitute an important subject of critical study and resulted in a number of scholarly works which approach it from various perspectives.

In the first paper, titled “Local Geographies, (Dis)Placements, and Global e-Romance in Emma Donoghue’s *Landing*”, Michaela Weiss focuses in particular on how the two protagonists in Donoghue’s novel negotiate their individual ideas of placement. Eventually, as the author concludes, the future of their long-distance e-romance depends on the willingness of both lovers to “relocate for love”, accepting partial displacement and setting aside their different views with regard to cosmopolitanism and communal identity. Silvia Rosivalová Baučeková’s paper “On the Margins of the Centre: Immigrant Foodscapes in Three Novels of London” analyses Zadie Smith’s *NW*, Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, and John Lanchester’s *Capital*, establishing that the common trait of the immigrant characters in these novels is their effort to create a sense of locality and belonging in London’s urban environment. The analysis stresses the importance of “foodscapes”, defined not only as the places where the characters acquire or prepare food, but also as the centres of immigrant communities, humanising their experience of an anonymous city. In “Representations of Regional Identity in Julia Darling’s Novel *The Taxi Driver’s Daughter*”, Elena A. Tuzlaeva demonstrates how Darling portrays the city of Newcastle by providing realistic details of its geography, social climate and territorially-marked linguistic features, and how this portrayal is interlinked with the characterisations in the novel. Zuzana Buráková writes about “Cormac McCarthy’s Nomads”, referring to Bourriaud’s concept of altermodernism as a theoretical framework. She establishes that McCarthy’s output offers examples of both forced nomadism, in his novel *The Road*, and virtual nomadism in *Blood Meridian*.

The fifth essay, “Linguistic Invention and Political Satire in the Contemporary Serbian Novel: A Comparative Perspective”, is written by Vladislava Gordić Petković. Petković points out that the protagonists’ awareness of moral hypocrisy in their social environment, and the anger it provokes, have become commonplace features in the twenty-first century Serbian novel, which is also characterised by a new, redefined approach to literary realism. Igor Maver discusses the characteristics of diasporic literature in “Andrew Riemer’s Diasporic Novels between Central Europe and Australia”. Riemer’s diasporic novels, in Maver’s opinion, ultimately reveal the author’s attempts to portray himself in a way which would incorporate both his submerged Central European identity and his newly acquired Australian one. Karzan Aziz Mahmood offers an analysis of Ahmed Saadawi’s novel in “Authentic Marginal Voices of Iraq: Saadawi’s *Frankenstein in Baghdad* Compared with Shelley’s *Frankenstein*”. He argues that Saadawi’s work gives voice to marginalised Iraqis in the aftermath of the US invasion, whereby the contextualisation of Shelley’s original text plays a significant role. The eighth paper, “Witi Ihimaera’s ‘Brave New World’: Visibility and Recognition in *The Uncle’s Story*”, written by Rudolf Sárdi, is dedicated to the first Maori writer to achieve international recognition. *The Uncle’s Story*, as Sárdi points out, deals not only with the depiction of Maori culture, but also with the broader question of sexual minorities and their position within a traditionalist community, which gives his narrative a universal significance.

Competently written, theoretically informed, and offering insightful discussions of the selected postmillennial novels, the above-mentioned papers are a valuable contribution to a growing and significant area of research. They draw attention to authors whose local, national or regional voices are marginalised, but whose artistic qualities recommend them. Thus conceived, this volume will appeal both to university scholars and to advanced-level students of literature interested in exploring contemporary fiction in the context of globalising processes. This book is also commendable as a well-conceived and well-structured collection of essays, which the editors have skilfully organised into a coherent whole. The individual works that comprise it are characterised by a variety of critical approaches, but firmly interconnected by their focus on the “new voices” they have explored.

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