

Transcultural Fictions and Travels in Cultural Criticism

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Resumo: Com um enfoque em obras de escritoras no Canadá e Brasil, este trabalho discute a noção de transculturalismo e a forma como as identidades gendradas são concebidas em um contexto de contatos culturais em um tempo e espaços específicos e como textos literários abordam esses temas. Argumento que a noção de transculturalismo, em suas várias definições, atravessa tempos e espaços, mas mantém inalteradas em seu cerne relações de poder assimétricas que em sua teorização tenta questionar e desestabilizar.

Abstract: With a focus on the work by women writers in Canada and Brazil, this essay discusses the notion of transculturalism and how gender identities are conceived in a context of cultural intermingling in time and space and how literary texts tackle these issues. I argue that the notion of transculturalism, in its several hues and many possible definitions and concepts, traverses time and space but retains the asymmetrical relations of power that it theoretically often claims to question and undermine.

Questions of travel

In *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan analyzes the metaphors of travel and displacement as analytical categories in contemporary critical discourse, observing how these metaphors are pervasive in modern cultures and how they are connected with increasingly disparities of wealth and power among discursive nations and communities. She argues that the concept of travel in the twentieth century cannot be disconnected from the historical legacy of the development of

capitalism and the expansion of imperialism that foster cultural, social and economic inequalities. For her, the “modern traveler” is a mythic figure that occupies a specific position identified as that of “a Western individual, usually male, ‘white’, of independent means, an introspective observer, literate, acquainted with ideas of the arts and culture, and above all, a humanist” (KAPLAN, 1998: 50). This agent of modernity works to confirm and legitimize the social reality of dichotomous construction such as First/Third Worlds, developed/underdeveloped, center/periphery. In this context, the so-called “Third-World” is emblematically located in a defined periphery in which stereotypes work to justify foreign policies — therefore, in her words, a typical example of a stereotypically view of the Third World conceives Brazil as a “cannibalistic, amorous, seductive culture” (op. cit.: 84). Interestingly, it is precisely this stereotype of the cannibal in relation to Brazilian culture that returns later on to haunt the national critical discourses about cultural traveling, translation, dependency, transculturation, and multiculturalism.

The Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago explores the way the metaphor of the travel is a fundamental element in the Latin American literary and cultural production (1989). In this context, traveling becomes not only a trope for movement, transference, and contact among disparate cultural spaces but also a metaphor for creation, rereading and translation. Of interest here is the way some theoretical notions travel in time and space. the notion of “transculturalisms” itself presupposes a movement in spatial and temporal terms that becomes responsible for the changes the term eventually acquires. I would like to try to map out the routes that the notion takes in its traveling in the Americas. My argument is that the notion traverses time and space but retains the very asymmetrical relations of power that it attempts to question or erase. In other words, the transcultural thinker in this context is not entirely unlike Kaplan’s traveler in the sense that “he” is often a privileged subject whose glance is turned towards a critique of

transnational politics but that frequently preserves the biased view in terms of domestic politics.

Questions of transculturation

As it is commonly acknowledged, “transculturation” is the term coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 40s to counter the notion of “acculturation” introduced by the Polish anthropologist, Malinowski. Ortiz devised this new term to describe not only the acquisition of a different culture but also the loss of an original one. The new culture is distinct but maintains the traces of the two previous ones that generated it (ORTIZ, 1978: 96-97). For Ortiz, the term is essential for an understanding of not only the history of Cuba but of all Latin America (and the three Americas, others would claim).

Along similar lines, Angel Rama, the Uruguayan critic who in the 70s extended Ortiz’s notion of transculturation to literary analysis, discusses how the notion can be used in relation to writers that show in their works the tension between the universal and the regional (AGUIAR; VASCONCELOS, 2001: 10-11). For Rama, transculturation is at the basis of the literary and critical discourse of Latin America. More recently, Alberto Moreira has pointed out, on the other hand, that Rama’s reading of transculturation relies on an optimistic and celebratory notion that transculturation is successful in the sense that the dominated culture always manages to be inscribed in the dominant culture (2001: 225). However, Moreira argues, there is also the other side of transculturation, or its negative or sinister side, as it tries to conciliate that which cannot or should not be reconciled. For Moreiras, transculturation insists in the dialectical conciliation and unification in the cultural global field.

Likewise, Silvia Spitta analyzes the notion of transculturation in spatial terms by defining the transcultured subject as someone who is consciously situated between two worlds, two cultures, two languages and who attempts to mediate between them. Transculturation for her organizes this “ambivalent and indeterminate space” (1995: 24). It is relevant

to observe how Spitta's concept echoes a similar notion developed in the theorization by Silviano Santiago about the condition of displacement and dislocation of Latin American discourse (1978). According to Walter Mignolo, "Santiago, like Ortíz, was sensitive to the marginality of his 'Westernness' and the particularities of loci of enunciation under transcultural, bilingual, and 'in-between' conditions. For Santiago (1978), 'transculturation' became the 'entre-lugar do discurso latino-americano' (in-between of Latin American discourse)" (MIGNOLO, 2000: 187). Mignolo, via Ortiz, arrives at Santiago as one of the pioneer thinkers of cultural transculturation. Santiago brings to the fore the paradoxical and ambivalent nature of Latin American discourse, caught between two shores but making a conscious choice in favor of an "anthropophagic" ritual.

Questions of exclusion

Moreiras's argument that the notion of transculturalism works as a form of reconciliation of cultural difference, thus erasing cultural difference and reducing the possibility of heterogeneity brings to the fore the issue of the role of "cultural transculturators" in a globalized world. The Canadian critic, Mary Louise Pratt, uses the term "transculturalism" as a phenomenon of what she calls the "contact zone," that is, "the social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination — like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (1992: 4). Pratt's analysis refers to a process of inter-cultural negotiation related to colonial encounters, but I would like to focus on the relations of power implicated in this movement.

The notion of transculturation has traveled throughout the Americas, but instead of blindly accepting its concept as a glorification of cultural transfers, we need to question what it has left out in this spatial and temporal traveling and how the

concept can be viewed today in a context of multicultural contacts and globalized worlds. I would like to interrogate how this phenomenon can be analyzed in literary terms by women writers from the Americas, specifically from Canada and Brazil.

Avitar Brah, in her study of diaspora, observes how a context of transmigration of people, capital, commodities and culture deeply affects the ways that “contemporary forms of transcultural identities are constituted” (1996: 242). In her words, “Multi-axiality foregrounds the intersectionality of economic, political and cultural facets of power. It highlights that power does not inhabit the realm of macro structures alone, but is thoroughly implicated in the everyday of lived experience. Multi-axiality draws attention to how power is exercised across global institutions — such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization” (op. cit.: 242). Multi-axiality would therefore be the basis for the study of cultural difference and multicultural thinking - issues that have pervaded the cultural analysis in Canada and the US for years now, but that only more recently have arrived in Brazil.

Luiz Alberto Gonçalves and Petronilha Silva in *O jogo das diferenças* (2001), a recent work on multiculturalism in Brazilian education, state that, in this recent globalized context, it becomes essential to recuperate the history of multiculturalism to show that it goes back to the previous centuries through the struggle of many oppressed peoples. They draw attention to the need to look at multiculturalism bearing in mind the fact that meanings are mutable depending on the context and locus of enunciation as well as historical conditions (GONÇALVES; SILVA, 2001: 12). They argue that the contemporary notion of multiculturalism in Latin America differs from that discussed in England, Australia, USA, Canada, and other countries in the sense that the groups that demand recognition of their cultural heritage in Latin America are the ones that in fact constructed the nations in which they live. In the case of the other countries, they believe, the issue of

migration is at the heart of a theorization of multiculturalism. In this case, multiculturalism, although it has become a globalized phenomenon, emerged in countries in which cultural diversity is seen as a problem for the construction of a national identity (op. cit: 18-20).

While acknowledging issues of cultural diversity and opening up spaces for silent subjects, transculturalisms and its correlate, multiculturalisms, in some peripheral nations has had to face, as Brah points out, the devastating consequences of how power is exercised in global institutions and how asymmetrical relations among countries are perpetuated in “transnational movements of people, capital, commodities, technologies, information and cultural forms” (1996: 241). I would cite as an example of such an instance the recent attempt of the World Trade Organization to pass a trade agreement that includes education as a service to be negotiated in economic terms. This will clearly have a disastrous and detrimental consequence for so-called Third World countries by posing a threat to the role of the government in public education and exposing the local system of education to commercialized services without control and regulation by national institutions (see Knight, 2002). As Santiago points out in relation to Brazilian society, this paradoxical stance — a kind of “sympathy for political conquests articulated by multiculturalism” and a “political antipathy towards the process of globalization” (“Worldly Appeal”) — remains at the core of notions of multiculturalism, transculturalism and the intermingling of cultures in the Americas.

Preliminary fictions

I have so far briefly addressed the notion of transculturalism and its impact on the Americas and now I would like to discuss how it has informed the contemporary debate on the construction of gendered identity. With a focus on women writers in Canada and Brazil, this essay shows how

gender identities are conceived at different times in a context of contacts of cultures in time and space and how literary texts tackle these changes. My argument, as I have been trying to show, is that the notion of transculturalism, in its several hues and many possible definitions and concepts, traverses time and space but retains the very asymmetrical relations of power that it theoretically often claims to question and undermine.

The notion of transculturalism has traveled from its first use in Ortiz in the 1940s to the contemporary debates about multiculturalism and cultural studies nowadays. In the trajectory it has omitted many actors and subjects that have been absent from such theorizations. While aware of the external influences in processes of cultural transfers, it has been blinded by its own internal exclusion and absence. Multiculturalism has been the focus of much debate in Canada, especially regarding its institutionalization as a governmental policy. On the other hand, the contemporary notion of multiculturalism in Latin America, as critics have argued, differs, for historical reasons, from that discussed in Canada and other countries. The issues of ethnicity and gender have been absent from the theorization of transculturalism in the past but have, slowly, been taken up by contemporary discourses on cultural politics. In Brazil, for example, it at first acquired an ethnic connotation and has only recently addressed other forms of cultural manifestation and protest, giving voice to other so-called minority groups-native Indians, women, diasporic and hyphenated subjects. In the case of Brazil, multiculturalism has been used as a means to question the fabricated image of the country as a pluri-ethnic society and the perpetuated stereotypical image of Brazil as a racial democracy. In Canadian terms, the concept interrogates the long-standing image of Canada as a multicultural mosaic in which political tolerance and democratic acceptance prevails above everything else. These national myths have been refuted in view of a concept of cultural diversity that recognizes social conflicts motivated by prejudices and discrimination and that envisages different possibilities of social organization in terms of

ethnicity, class, race, gender and sexuality (GONÇALVES; SILVA, 2001).

This essay focuses primarily on how contemporary women writers from Brazil and Canada have been opening up new venues through their writing in which they can discuss, in their own terms, issues of racial and gender relations within what is perceived nowadays as a multicultural society. I interrogate how they create transcultural fictions that negotiate new possibilities of locations and positionings and new gendered identities in translocal movements and constant processes of global exchange and how gender influences the way we perceive these movements.

Transculturalisms and multiculturalisms

In our increasingly globalized and transnational world, in which we witness the permeability of national frontiers and the constant experience of subjects in transit, it becomes paramount to question notions of cultural authenticity and national hegemony. It is now understood that the concept of a homogeneous and integrated nation is an invention. However, hegemonic forces continuously attempt to fabricate an image of a nation that is supposed to incorporate preestablished identity formations. In this sense, multiculturalisms and/or transculturalisms have forced a dialogue and questioned the concepts of cultural purity and have thus caused a strong impact that has changed dramatically, in some cases, the pattern of national identity. Transculturalisms, as I would like to define it, refers, above all, to the several possibilities of contact between peoples in different times and contexts, thus establishing diverse forms of belonging. It may be understood in a context of multiculturalism in which the possibility of multiple contacts is informed by a movement — a “trans” (in the sense of “across, beyond, through, change, transfer”) — of translocation,

transposition, translation, transfer, transference, transaction, transportation, transcription, transformation, transgression, transit, transition, transmission, transnational, and so forth. It may be viewed as well as a social space in which cultures meet and clash but in which highly asymmetrical relations of dominance predominate (PRATT, 1992: 1-7). Alberto Moreiras, speaking against what he sees as a conciliatory tone of transculturation, argues, as mentioned before, that the concept is as historically produced as the episodes it claims to interpret. In his bleak view of the notion, Moreiras believes that transculturation appropriates cultural difference, only to reduce the possibility of radical cultural heterogeneity (2001: 221-235). I believe that this asymmetry and ambivalence is also at the heart also of the present notion of transculturalisms and multiculturalisms. Despite the focus on multiplicity, plurality and diversity what is at stake is, very often, a confrontation that makes explicit the nature of the power relations involved in the movement of transference, translocation, transaction, and so on, and the urgent need for a (re)negotiation of spaces, terms, identities.

Understood in the context of multi- and trans-cultural relations, an array of terms has often been employed to characterize this contact and ambiguous zone through which transnational cultures meet, dialogue and converge: border, hybridity, *metissage*, migration, mixed race, diaspora, etc. Such terms have taken central stage in the theorization and cultural criticism in the Americas. As several critics have pointed out, due to historical specificities that have privilege the movement of peoples, capital and goods, the Americas is a privileged locus from which to discuss the notions of transculturation, migration, and transnational cultures (MOREIRAS, 2001; PORTO, 2002). Aligned with global forces while simultaneously resisting it, the Americas have been the locus of a movement of both rootedness and displacement in which national boundaries have been challenged and new diasporic affiliations acknowledged, becoming “rooted and routed,” as Clifford would have it, in

different contexts (CLIFFORD, 1994: 308-309). Globalization as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon informs not only the transnational flow of capital, but also of people (BRYDON, 2001). In this context, diasporic consciousness as a byproduct phenomenon of transnational movements becomes an important site of theorization for the analysis of transculturalisms in the Americas in view of the fact that it forced the (re)configuration of concepts of national identity.

Avtar Brah views the concept of diaspora as closely related to that of borders, thus partaking also of the notion of the politics of location and dislocation. For her the three concepts — diaspora, borders and politics of dis/location — are immanent. For Brah, *diaspora space* represents “the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes. It is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed” (BRAH, 1996: 208). This “multi-axiality” is central to a contemporary understanding of diasporic consciousness.

Clifford suggests, however, that “it is not possible to define diaspora sharply,” but argues that in the late twentieth century most communities express some forms of diasporic dimension, sharing some common features, such as, “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (CLIFFORD, 1994:305-310). But in what ways would this modern diaspora be different from previous historical records of nomad peoples? For Clifford, the modern diaspora partakes of a constitutive entanglement in that it both resists and uses hegemonizing forces. In other words, it is both inside and outside the very system it claims to undermine, thus, being involved at the same time in efforts towards a *globalization from below* and *globalization from above* (op. cit.: 327) — the terms proposed by Brecher et al.

Along similar lines, Smaro Kamboureli argues that the term diaspora evokes the notion of displacement in general, but

one has to be aware of the fact that “particular communities and individuals resist being subsumed into a single narrative; instead, they demand that we address their cultural, historical, and ideological specificities” (2000: vii). Even more important is the awareness that one subject’s experience cannot be taken to represent all the others (SPIVAK, 1996). I argue that such concern for cultural, historical and political specificities is at the core of several narratives by women in which female characters are portrayed in a multiplicity and variety of experiences, comprising a compelling picture of possibilities for women as diasporic subjects.

Carole Boyce Davies observes how the renegotiation of identities is fundamental for the analysis of migrancy by the fact that the migrating subject occupies an “in-between space that is neither here nor there” (1994: 1). Identity and place are deeply intertwined in the ambivalent experiences of diasporic subjects. The need for a re-negotiation of identities appears often in the texts by women writers as the movement of spatial dislocation is also an act of self-discovery. This displacement is very often felt through the body, which acts as the means and vehicle for the characters to question the construction of gendered identities.

Gender identities and the new diaspora

In the context of a travel in transculturalism in the Americas, specifically in Canada and Brazil, it is relevant to discuss the mechanisms that contemporary women writers from different cultural backgrounds, social classes and racial groups have devised in order to portray the discursive construction of feminine subjects in a context of cultural and social displacement, transnational dialogues and diversified forms of cultural contacts. As part of what is now perceived as “a new diaspora,” these women writers depict, in their writings, the central role that women play in this new social-cultural context. Furthermore, these contemporary women writers very often explore female bodily images and figures as mediators and

borders in social spaces of contacts and cultural translation.

For Clifford, “[d]iasporic experiences are always gendered.” However, he perceives a tendency in dealing with notions of displacement and diaspora in unmarked ways, thus contributing for a theorization of diaspora that establishes male experiences as the norm. In his view, keeping in mind gender as a category for analysis of forms of dislocation provides a powerful insight into the experience of diaspora (1994: 313-314). It is also paramount to consider the effects of diaspora experience in gender relations. In other words, how do women relate to contemporary transnational movements of capital and culture? Are patriarchal structures renewed or questioned? How are gender relations renegotiated in this new space? How do hyphenated women mediate two often conflicting realities, two different versions of patriarchy and oppressive systems? And, above all, how do women from different diasporic affiliations relate to each other? Clifford believes that women in diaspora may lead a doubly painful life as they try to bridge the gap between two divergent versions of the world: “diaspora women are caught between patriarchies, ambiguous past, and future. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways (op. cit.: 314). And I would add, also often in ambivalent and asymmetrical ways.

Along similar lines, Gayatri Spivak, in “Diasporas old and new: women in the transnational world,” argues that the condition of diasporic subjects in the present is closely associated to what she sees as the failure of civil societies in developing countries to enact social transformations. In this context, women as diasporic subjects are placed in a highly uneasy and rather questionable position. According to her,

Strictly speaking, the undermining of the civil structures of society is now a global situation (...) The diasporic underclass is often the worst victim (...) the rural poor and the urban subproletariat are the worst victims. In both these sectors, women are the superdominated, the super-exploited, but

not in the same way (...) Women, with other disenfranchised groups, have never been full subjects of and agents in civil society: in other words, first-class citizens of a state (1996: 249).

For Spivak, this new diaspora of contemporaneity, as opposed to the old one that was the result of religious oppression, war, slavery, imperialist politics, has as a new element the differentiating role of women. As she put it, “In other words, are the new diasporas quite new? Every rupture is also a repetition. The only significant difference is the use, abuse, participation, and role of women” (1996: 250). In Spivak’s terms, and I believe in Clifford’s as well, women play a crucial role in this new diaspora as “this group of gendered outsiders inside are much in demand by the transnational agencies of globalization for employment and collaboration” (op. cit.: 251). In this way, migrancy becomes a means through which bio-political power circulates and maintains its status. According to Spivak, these gendered diasporic subjects should think of themselves “not as victims below but agents above, resisting the consequences of globalization as well as redressing the cultural vicissitudes of migrancy” (op. cit.: 251). In other words, instead of accepting a victimized role in the process, diasporic women, as the subjects that are most alienated from a situation of agency in civil society, may resist being incorporated into this new system by adopting the role of actors. However, one has to be aware of the danger of generalizing women’s experience and using the actions of women who resist and reject being incorporated in their system as standing for all women (op. cit.: 260). Yet, if the female subaltern cannot speak, as Spivak claims elsewhere, there is need to create the space and conditions so that when she speaks she can be heard, and, above all, we have to learn to listen (2000). Women writers have also to face the challenge of avoiding the unconscious (re)production of commodified patterns of migrant literature.

Transcultural fictions: women writers in Canada and Brazil

Nossos corações fêmeas são especiarias de muito longe.

Ana Miranda

She remember them in she body.

Dionne Brand

Diana Brydon, in a recent article which compares postcolonialism in Brazil and Canada, stresses the crucial importance of the work of creative artists and literary critics in devising some forms of resistance to globalizing initiatives and in opening new venues and alternative models to foster a dialogue that, in a transnational world, may lead to forms of global awakening. In her view, the academy has been more receptive and open to discuss contemporary diaspora and transnational movements and “literary text are exceptionally well constituted for presenting complex relationality in subversively,” but, nevertheless, “non-threatening ways” (BRYDON, 2001: 68) — and, I would add, often in complicitous ways.

Analyzing the different forms of gendered diaspora predicaments in Canada and Brazil becomes a critical tool for the understanding of women in dislocation in a comparative perspective. Along these lines, as Brydon points out, Canada and Brazil share two major areas which are closely related to the historical bases of diasporic consciousness: the movement of the indigenous people and that of the Black Atlantic, in Paul Gilroy’s terms (op. cit.: 70). These spaces as privilege loci of diasporic affiliations are also fertile grounds for the analysis of women in dislocation that will allow us not only to see these nations as a site of movement and deterritorialization in our present globalizing world but also address the issue of how gendered identities are formed or dealt with in such a scenario.

The Caribbean-Canadian writer, Dionne Brand, in *In another place, not here* (1996) describes an episode that may be analyzed in terms of diasporic experiences of gendered subjects. The narrative voice reveals the conversation of two Caribbean women — Elizete and Jocelyn — about their migrant situation in Canada. Jocelyn tells Elizete an episode in which she and Myriam, a woman from Brazil, suffered through their bodies the diasporic experiences of a gendered subject. The episode takes place in a gathering of some migrant and displaced friends in which, as a joke, somebody shouts the word “Immigration, pretending that a governmental agency is there to check their migrant status:

Myriam and me fly out the window the same time. Glass chipping like ice, sticking to we flesh. “Immigration!” What a word. That word could kill, oui. That word could make a woman lay down with she legs open and she mind shut. Don’t think it en’t so. Myriam and me wasn’t afraid of the glass. We see clear road. Just a window in front of we? Never (...) Glass, broken white bone and tear up skin and me with blood between my legs (BRAND, 1996: 80-81).

In their attempt to escape persecution by law, the women suffered in their bodies the fear of gender displacement: one of them breaks her leg and the other has a miscarriage, and misses, consequently, the chance of getting the legal papers to which she would be entitled in case she had the baby. As the women continue to talk about the episode, they wonder why Myriam, coming from a rich gold mining place called “Minas Gerais in Brazil”, was in Canada, to which somebody answers: “Girl, you forgetting her colour” (op. cit.: 82), thus exposing the racial and gender biased component of Brazilian society. And this is how the narrative voice concludes the telling of the story: “Jocelyn pregnant for papers and Myriam in Jocelyn’s mouth losing her leg through laughing and she, Elizete, losing her hearing, every

part of the body put to use like a hammer or bucket, every part emptied like a shelf or a doorway” (op. cit.: 82). For these hyphenated women who try to negotiate their diasporic affiliations, the body feels and reveals their experience as displaced subjects. It is an experience of loss, but also of strength: the body as weapon — “a hammer” — and also as a target — “a bucket” — becomes the means of struggle but also the object of oppression. As the epigraph taken from Brand’s novel suggests, “she remember them in she body,” every fear, fight, oppression but also every joy and victory is felt on and through the body.

In similar terms, in *Amrik* (1997), the Brazilian writer, Ana Miranda, explores the plights of Amina, an Arabic who is forced to follow her blind uncle to America since, unlike her brothers, her father feels that she has “no use what is the use for women,” but to serve as the means of exchange in a patriarchal system? Amina’s way of dealing with her new diasporic situation and hyphenated identity is through the body in a defiant movement of cultural (re)appropriation: by performing sensual and seductive dances and exposing the possibilities of pleasure through the body. The body, in this case, becomes both a site for transgression but also the means through which she suffers repression as a punishment in her being denied entrance in the traditional Brazilian society. In the end, however, she prefers to revert to her traditional heritage by metaphorically “stealing horses,” as a form of subversion rather than conformity to pre-established gender paradigms.

The above episodes are instances of how ethnicity and gender issues are central to an analysis of diaspora and transculturalism. In terms of women writers whose narratives disclose the experiences of diasporic subjects, the body becomes a powerful site for oppression but also one that allows for the (re)negotiation of identities in a constant flux. It is also a site of memory, remembrance, refusal to forget, as a marker of women’s migrant affiliations and positions. The metaphor of the body in the novels analyzed are envisaged as an enactment of multiple ways of belonging, displacement and

deterritorialization. Place and body become entangled in the diasporic experiences of hyphenated women. Later on, another character in Brand's novel, Verlia, a symbol of strength and political struggle for the rights of diasporic women, concludes: "Her body feels prepared, fit for North America, slick" (op. cit.: 150). Yet, her ideal of a place in which her mind and body will be free, like Amina's, remains a dream "in another place, not here," some other place, "less tortuous, less fleshy" (op. cit.: 247), and another "Amrik" for Amina.

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