Introduction
Mapping Mobility: Representing Places and People Ethically

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This collection of essays on mapping mobility aims at questioning how changing relationships to land, place and landscape challenge authors and artists in representing otherness ethically, depending on the various histories of colonial power and postcolonial empowerment of the territories whose stories are being narrated. As Shameem Black notes in *Fiction Across Borders: Imagining the Lives of Others in Late Twentieth-Century Novels*, "because fiction conventionally calls attention to the texture of experiential life through emplotted action, the novel almost always participates in one form or another of social border crossing" (8). The articles that follow discuss the ways in which geographical border crossings and social border crossings are enmeshed, and how this entanglement is represented in various discourses and in literature and the arts. In this volume, "ethics" is understood in the way Shameem Black defines it, as "the ethos of responsibility to one's object of inquiry, responsibility opposed to hegemonic domination and representational violence" (3).

As Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary argues in *The Geographies of Migration and Mobility in a Globalizing World*, mapping contemporary moving patterns has become very difficult, because moving patterns do not correspond anymore to arrows tracing direct trajectories from one point to another ("The Geographies of Migration and Mobility"). Similarly, Sarah Mekdjian foregrounds in a chapter about mapping borders and mobility (Amilhat-Szary, *Borderities and the Politics of Contemporary Mobile Borders*), that although borders are as much mobile as people, mapping should not

be limited to being an instrument of governmentality, but ought to be critiqued by experts on contemporary borders and apparatus of surveillance. Sarah Mekdjian describes and analyzes several counter-cartography projects which have involved the production of alternative visual narratives of borders (Amilhat-Szary; Mekdjian, "*This Is Not An Atlas*"), questioning and deconstructing traditional maps. In a similar way, the chapters in this volume question the ethics of representation when discussing and representing human border crossings and places of belonging, whether in legal discourse or in literature and the arts.

Borders, like places, change over time, for geopolitical reasons, but also for human or practical reasons, to the point that they may become nearly invisible. On the other hand, borders are erected every year in parts of the world where there were none before (Papin; Tertrais; Zajec). And yet, the mutability of borders and places does not necessarily match the mobility of people. Borders usually deter and impede mobility, when they do not altogether prevent people from crossing, trespassing or transgressing. Those words, however, all denote the passing over as well as the forbidden status of the passage. The changing nature of borders and places therefore raises issues of representation, according to point of views and ideological perspectives. In fact, traditional mapping is usually deprived of human representation. As Tim Ingold, a British anthropologist, explains in his book *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*,

> the map was not arrived at by any process of observation and measurement but through a visionary experience of revelation. Rather than surveying the opaque, outer surfaces of the world, the visionary – in whose eyes these surfaces were rendered transparent – would see *into* it whereupon was revealed to his mind an inner reality of which the world's outward, visible forms were appearances. One rendering of this all-encompassing vision was the *mappa mundi* or world map. (199)

As Ingold reminds us, the *mappa mundi* was not so much descriptive as prescriptive. He suggests that geometric paintings in the style of Kandinsky for example, are the precise counterpart of the medieval *mappa mundi* and serve the same purpose of summoning the theme of meditative recollection. Tim Ingold's work emphasizes the fact that the world represented on a map is usually one deprived of its inhabitants: "No one is there; nothing moves or makes any sound. Now in just the same way the journeys of the inhabitants are eliminated from the cartographic map, the voices of the past are eliminated from the printed text" (*Lines*, 24). In the same spirit, in *The*

Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau showed that modern maps eliminated all trace of the practices that produced them, creating the impression that the structure of the map sprang directly from the structure of the world (quoted in Ingold, *Lines*, 24). In other words, maps are almost always disembodied and even, one could say, dispirited – if not dispiriting.

And yet, fundamentally, the story of human people has been about migration and changing places since the beginning of time, and that story is not restricted to certain parts of the world. Such movements affect the communities migrants leave, as much as the communities that receive these migrants. They also impact communities along the route of transit. And therefore mapping involves not only the nomadic journey of people from one point to another point, but also the way those people make new homes, the way they embody the tremendous changes taking place in their lives. Mapping also involves the potentially transformative impact of their presence on the places where they stop, stay or settle.

In Mohsin Hamid's novel *Exit West* published in 2017 and written by an author born in Pakistan and now a British citizen, Nadia and Saeed, the main protagonists, have decided to flee their city. The city itself is described, without being named, as "swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war" (1). Nadia and Saeed decide to migrate when they hear that strange black doors are being opened throughout the city, giving access to places like London, San Francisco, Greece or Dubai:

> [Nadia] approached the door, and drawing close she was struck by its darkness, its opacity, the way that it did not reveal what was on the other side, also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end, and she turned to Saeed and found him staring at her, and his face was full of worry, and sorrow, and she took his hands in hers and held them tight, and then, releasing them, and without a word, she stepped through. (97-98)

The moment of setting off is depicted as one when usual referential landmarks are utterly upset. The perception of space and time is altered, as space lacks depth and transparency, and time is suspended. All sense of perspective is absent, either spatially or time-wise. The action of going away is described not with the adverb "along," or "across," but with the adverb "through," denoting a radical jump, because Nadia is literally leaping into the unknown. The paragraph is indeed followed by a typographical blank on the page. In this paragraph, affects are represented and acknowledged by the narrator ("worry," "sorrow") and the bodies of Nadia and Saeed

connect just before she leaves, as she “took his hands in hers and held them tight, and then, releasing them, and without a word, she stepped through.” Looks and gestures have replaced words in that moment of intense emotion, when Nadia steps through, with the comma inserted before the last three words, emphasizing both the effort and the impetus. In that decisive instant, just before she leaves, her gaze only finds opacity in the space around her. She turns towards Saeed and only in his eyes and the emotions they carry is she able to reclaim the dynamics of movement.

That example shows the way fiction can represent displacement from one place to another in terms of embodied spaces. Because emotions and affects dominate moments of departure and definitive journeys away from what was considered home, words can become useless and silence then prevails. But the event that is taking place is nonetheless embodied, as if imprinted in bodily perceptions and memories. What dominates this mode of representation is therefore not so much the precision of the journey (the doors are ordinary doors and the adverb “through” is vague enough), but the density of what is experienced emotionally. Hamid’s craft is to focus our attention as readers on what makes this scene human. The emigration process can be represented in bland almost mechanical terms, but Hamid shows that the human experience is every time unique for those who, like Nadia and Saeed, flee their homes. In Hamid’s novel, places are nameless, but the fate of the protagonists is what matters. He highlights the personal and inter-personal revolutions in the minds and bodies that the process of migrating has triggered. As Shameem Black argues, “border-crossing novels themselves suggest that the political and philosophical problems they raise will never be fully resolved” (4). It is the case with Hamid’s novel, which also draws attention to the ethics of representing the other in a context of global human migrating movements, emphasizing personal strategies of place-making and questioning the individual sense of belonging, issues that all the chapters in this volume share in different ways.

The present volume opens with two chapters focusing on Australia and how the denial of the presence of the Aboriginal Other produced a paradoxical mapping of immobility both in legal discourse and in fiction. Virginie C. Bernard’s article addresses the antagonistic representations of space between the Aboriginal Noongars of the South West of Western Australia and the Australian State in the context of the Noongars’ native title claims, both in Courts and through a negotiation

process. She describes how the long negotiations brought to light the inextricable link between the Aboriginal Noongars and the descendants of settlers and immigrants, and how, if they were to have a common future, the Australian State needed to take into account the peculiarities and the specific needs of the Aborigines, revising its vision of space, and consolidating its legitimacy while comforting its national history. In her article “Mapping Mobility in Australia: from the Bush to the Desert and the Ghostly Place,” Christine Vandamme examines Australia’s relationship to the land in fiction. In particular, she focuses on the recurrent and paradoxical immobility, as well as on the absence of a frontier myth, showing how it was until recently both a symptom of Australia’s relation to its colonial history and of the obliteration of its Indigenous population. Christine Vandamme’s paper analyses the difficulties non-Indigenous Australians have had from the very beginning of settlement in mapping out the iconic national bush and its modern avatar, the desert, both literally and figuratively. She also addresses issues of spectrality and how spectrality reflects deeper political and cultural dynamics. The third article, by Anne-Sophie Letessier, focuses on recent fiction produced in Canada. She examines the relationship between place and text and how Aritha van Herk’s *Places Far From Ellesmere* is informed by the opposed dynamics of the centripetal forces of “emplacement” as “entextment,” in an attempt to outrule textual and territorial enclosure. In her paper, Anne-Sophie Letessier shows how Aritha van Herk plays with the mobility of artistic representation, shifting the traditional definition of place in order to write what she calls “unmappable, unfixed and unfixing *geografictione*.” Moving on to South Asia, the fourth article, by Maëlle Jeanniard du Dot, offers a study of Nadeem Aslam’s fourth novel *The Blind Man’s Garden,* in which the representation of the border is central. It is represented as a prism, allowing the story to shed a poetic light on discourses obscured by the globalization of media. While the physical border is threatened by war and violence, the symbolical border reveals Aslam’s poetics of confluence. The border becomes the place of spatial and historical continuity rather than a limiting boundary. In the fifth article, the paradigm shifts somewhat, focusing on an example of geopoetic mapping of the West coast of Ireland. Nessa Cronin’s article shifts the reading from fiction to cultural geography, as she describes and analyzes the status of the Tim Robinson Archive, emphasizing Tim Robinson’s unique relationship to place and map-making in the West of Ireland from the 1970s to 2014 when he donated his archive to the National University of Ireland, Galway. Her

paper explores the archive of Tim Robinson through an artist-in-the-archive research project, *Iarsma: Fragments from an Archive*, based on Robinson's maps and writings. Artistic visual mapping is also the subject of Lisa Fitzgerald's article as she studies the visible glitches in examples of Google Street View digital mapping. Her purpose is to ask to what extent street views might be read as documenting early 21st century social life. In enabling the user to zoom down from the traditional cartographic bird's-eye view to an immersive 360° street level environment, Google Street View creates unsettling moments. Lisa Fitzgerald argues that artists have begun to appropriate these images in their own work, building on a history of street photography as seen in the works of Paul Strand, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Robert Frank, but also emphasising how place is represented by contemporary artists and the repercussions it bears for the aesthetics of space. Finally, Jessica Small's interview of Iranian-American author Dina Nayeri is a valuable addition to the volume as a variation on the theme of representing mobility and mapping border-crossing. Jessica Small introduces Dina Nayeri whose writing maps and explores the notion of home, as well as its metamorphoses. She shows through the words of a young novelist born in Iran and raised in the United-States, how the notion of home is rendered more complex through displacement, stressing how the question of mapping and representing mobility needs to be all the more subtle in a context where people experience displacement continually.

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