

Chapter 15

Australian 'immersion' narratives: memoirs of contemporary language travel

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By definition, travel narratives invoke an experience of moving between cultural worlds. Only a fraction of travel books in English, however, emphasise the language borders that are crossed in much international travel, and deal in a sustained way with the question of how language impinges on the self. This question is central to a range of memoirs by migrants *into* English: texts such as *Lost in Translation: A life in a new language* (1989) by the Polish-born Canadian Eva Hoffman, *Polite Lies: On being a woman caught between cultures* (1997) by Japanese-born American Kyoko Mori, or Chilean exile to the United States Ariel Dorfman's *Heading South, Looking North: A bilingual journey* (1998).¹ Migrants into anglophone cultures are increasingly drawing our attention to what is involved in migrating into a new language, but this isn't the case for people travelling in the opposite direction. The issue of language is also absent from major critical studies of travel writing, such as those by Dennis Porter (1991), Caren Kaplan (1996), Inderpal Grewal (1996), Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (1998), and is only touched on in Mary Louise Pratt's influential study *Imperial Eyes* (1992).² Unlike 'landscape', 'language' isn't featured in any of the indexes of these otherwise wide-ranging books.

The lack of interest in language in popular travel writing in English is no doubt connected with the global reach of English, and the fact that many anglophone travel writers are monolingual or envisage a readership with no other language. It is symptomatic of the global dominance of English that questions about language and identity are largely invisible in anglophone travel writing. This chapter explores some atypical travel books in this context—'immersion' narratives that explicitly foreground what might be called 'language travel'—and reads them in relation to a wider critical debate about the representation of self and other in travel literature. I examine three Australian texts—Gillian Bouras's *A Foreign Wife* (1986), Sarah Turnbull's *Almost French: A new life in Paris* (2002) and John Matee's *Semar's Cave: An Indonesian journal* (2004)—drawing attention

to what appear to be some common cultural assumptions in the authors' accounts of their interactions with speakers of languages other than English.³

This chapter draws on research for a larger project on the phenomenon of language travel: 'Anglos abroad: narratives of immersion into a foreign language and culture'. One of the aims of the project is to explore the degree to which a metaphorical colonising of 'cultural others' is inevitable in Western travel writing, as Pratt, among other critics, has argued.⁴ The prevailing trope that Pratt identifies in Western travel writing, from the French explorer La Condamine to American writer Paul Theroux, is that of the 'seeing-man', a traveller given to a 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' view of the cultural landscape. Pratt presents American critic Joan Didion's 1983 book *Salvador* as an exception to the 'imperial eye' mode: an exception that proves the rule. For Pratt, Didion rightly renounces any claim to insightful comment on El Salvadoran realities: 'Didion identifies her subject matter as inaccessible to her [W]estern...self...her book aggressively and lucidly sought to abdicate the authority of the seeing-man.' Pratt contends that only authors of *testimonio*, such as the Bolivian activist Domitila Barrios de Chungara, can claim to write with authority about Latin America, and that Western travel writing about non-Western places has effectively reached a dead end.⁵

Pratt is concerned primarily with the power differential operating between writers travelling from colonising or neo-colonial powers and the people they write about in colonised or post-colonial countries. This asymmetry of power is not obviously relevant to Sarah Turnbull and Gillian Bouras, who write about their expatriate lives in Europe, although Bouras moves from a middle-class metropolitan context, Melbourne, to a Peloponnesian village. It is clearly present in *Semar's Cave*. Mateer expresses discomfort with his privileged position as a Western traveller who can choose cheap methods of transport such as the *sudako* (or minibus) for the thrill of adventure, while Indonesians would go by cab if they had his money.⁶ The question of whether Western travel writing offers alternatives to the 'seeing-man' mode of cultural representation is, however, as applicable to the texts by Bouras and Turnbull as to Mateer's.

Bouras, A Foreign Wife

As an Australian narrative of language travel, Gillian Bouras's *A Foreign Wife* is unusual in being written from the viewpoint of a migrant rather than a temporary traveller. While many well-known Australians have been expatriates based in anglophone countries, until recently few Australian authors have written as long-term migrants to non-English-speaking countries. Bouras (born in 1945) moved to Greece with her Greek-born husband and two Australian-born children in 1980; a third son was born in Greece. *A Foreign Wife* is the first of several books about her experiences in Greece. It was followed by memoirs *A*

Fair Exchange (1991) and *Aphrodite and the Others* (1994), the novel *A Stranger Here* (1996) and memoir *Starting Again* (1999).⁷ Settling in her husband's village near the southern city of Kalamata, Bouras was plunged into an exclusively Greek-speaking environment. Although on arrival she could speak and read simple Greek, after-dinner conversation was at first 'a strange staccato rattle'.⁸ She evokes from an Anglo-Australian viewpoint the sense of marginality that comes with not speaking the dominant language and, as a parent, the loss of authority that such a lack of cultural literacy and linguistic fluency brings:

At dinner-time, speaking Greek, I make a grammatical error. Dimitrios and Nikolaos hoot, and then the former crushes me with a look, a practice he has down to a fine art. 'You'll never speak it well,' he announces, firmly, for the umpteenth time, 'not like Sandra, Ken and Teresa. Why can't you be like them?' Why indeed? I feel sick, as I usually do, over any breakdown or error in communication, but make an effort to stand up for myself.⁹

Bouras writes poignantly of the impact on herself and her children of the 'reversal of the child-parent relationship' in which the child becomes the one who 'knows all about language, communication and protocol'. One of the consequences of her loss of status in her oldest son's eyes was his new preference for his grandmother's company in public: 'It was a devastating moment for me when Dimitri announced he would walk through the main streets of the village with *Yiayia*, but not with me. *Yiayia* became the authority on everything from dietary law to bus timetables.' Bouras comments, 'The migrant mother almost inevitably finds herself involved in a power struggle which she is bound to lose.'¹⁰

Bouras's perspective on her children's induction into Greek compares interestingly with British expatriate author Tim Parks' memoir of his bicultural family life in Italy, *An Italian Education* (1996). Parks writes about two concepts that he sees as key notions in Italian culture: '*spettacolo*' and '*fare festa*' (literally, 'making a party' for someone—an expression that, Parks says, 'combines the ideas of welcoming [someone] and smothering them with physical affection'). He illustrates the centrality of these concepts with an account of a visit by his parents-in-law and its effect on his Italian children, Michele and Stefi.

It would truly be hard to exaggerate the cooing and crying and sighing and kissing and nose-tweaking and exclamations and tears and tickles and cuddles that now have to take place...Nonna lifts up Michele and dances round and round with him and '*O che bel bambino! O che ometto splendido! O che spettacolo!*'¹¹

Parks' children are caught up in a dramatic excitement when their *nonni* arrive, a kind of performance they are drawn into. Parks suggests that there is a strongly visual element to expressing one's feelings in Italian, and it is this that makes

Italian behaviour seem theatrical to an 'Anglo' observer. Although he highlights the cultural basis for this perception, however, he is clearly uncomfortable with his Italian family's expressiveness, and calls its sincerity into question.

[M]other and father, sons and daughters, all criticise each other endlessly...[Y]et when...the Baldassarres are actually face to face, the gestures of affection, the extravagant *fare festa*...could not be more voluble or enthusiastic.

My wife embraces her mother rapturously. And her father. Michele watches them. Everybody does seem perfectly...delighted to see each other. The *nonni* are here! *Evviva!* Yet Michele is surely aware, even at five, that we complain a great deal about these [visits]...no doubt the children take all this in, this wonderful *spettacolo* of affection, this carefully choreographed *festa*.

In *A Foreign Wife*, Bouras writes similarly of the theatricality and flamboyance of her sons when they are speaking Greek and their relative quietness when speaking English. Like Parks, she emphasises the connectedness of speech and body language:

The boys are completely different people when they speak Greek. It's not just the sound of the language, but the sense of drama, the marked emphases, the sweeping gestures and body language which inevitably accompany it. When speaking English, they are quieter, less flamboyant and, Greeks would say, duller.¹²

Just as Parks casts his Italian in-laws' behaviour in theatrical terms ('choreographed', 'show'), so Bouras is struck by the 'sense of drama' that characterises her boys' Greek-speaking selves. Where Parks is sceptical, tending to valorise his own cultural reflexes for all that he is aware of them, Bouras is more sympathetic to this other emotional style. Describing a return visit to Melbourne, she writes, '[T]he boys are too noisy and exuberant for understated Australia, and people here have firm ideas about...the place of children';¹³ she identifies more closely here with her children than with the expectations of Australian relatives. Later, she recalls her frustration with what seemed initially to be her sons' 'Greek over-reaction to everything': "'Tone it down," I would say through clenched teeth as they yelled, gesticulated, smote their foreheads and thoroughly indulged themselves. "You're not on stage".'¹⁴ Now, she writes, she no longer thinks they 'exaggerate or over-emphasize'; even so, the phrase 'thoroughly indulged themselves' expresses something of her earlier Anglo-Australian cultural perspective.

As much as any resemblance between Greek and Italian emotional idioms, the use of the metaphor of drama by Bouras and Parks to mark what looks and feels (familarly) foreign to them suggests a close parallel between British and

Australian cultural attitudes towards expressing feelings. What seems common to both is wariness towards the open expression of feeling, a tendency to see it as self-indulgent and exaggerated. Bouras's writing, however, shows how she has partly incorporated a different cultural take on emotions from the one she grew up with, and has made an inward shift towards a Greek-speaking perspective.

Turnbull, Almost French

Like Bouras, Sarah Turnbull, the author of *Almost French*, writes as the resident of another country. Formerly an SBS television reporter, Turnbull moved to Europe as a freelance journalist in the early 1990s. She went to France initially to visit a Frenchman whom she had met in Bucharest, and eventually made her home with him in Paris. In writing about her life there, Turnbull sometimes resorts to generalisations about 'the French', commenting for example on a national tendency for sober self-criticism alongside a 'glaringly Gallic' quality.¹⁵ Her writing shares something of the spirit of satirical travel guidebooks such as the 'Xenophobe' series, which, unlike much contemporary academic scholarship in the humanities, are not concerned with avoiding essentialism. Turnbull's memoir, however, reflects tellingly on aspects of the relationship between self, language and culture brought to the fore by her experience of living as a foreigner in France. Her most effective writing probes and dramatises differences in expected ways of thinking and behaving that emerge from her conversations with French speakers.

A memorable encounter occurs at a cocktail party in Paris. It strikes Turnbull that the other guests are 'hanging back', none willing 'to break the ice'. She portrays herself trying to 'bridge' the 'cool distance' by introducing herself:

'Hello, my name is Sarah.'

Surprise scuds across the faces of a crisp couple, who step back involuntarily before accepting my outstretched hand...For the next ten minutes I practise my best 'people skills', chit-chatting in the friendly interested sort of way which can always be relied on to start conversation. What do you do? How do you know so-and-so? These people are proving to be much harder work than I imagined, though. While they answer politely enough they don't initiate any questions of their own. Unnerved, I try even harder, filling the silences with embarrassingly inane remarks. *Quel beau salon! Regardez les belles peintures!* Two heads nod impassively at me. It isn't working, I realize...they seem to be shrinking away from me. God, don't they know the golden rule (show interest in others and they'll show interest in you)? Don't they know they're supposed to make an effort? A sudden wave of doubt rushes over me. Could the rules be

so different in France? But then how else are you supposed to get the ball rolling if not with preliminary questions...

Back at the apartment, we carry out a post-mortem of the evening. To me, spending an entire evening talking to your partner is antisocial but Frédéric says this happens all the time at parties in France. As for my bold introduction, to the couple it would have seemed like an intrusion; my clumsy questions cluttering up each comfortable silence. Far from building a rapport, my efforts only seemed to diminish me in their eyes, as though by showing interest in them I had revealed the depths of my own dullness. Enthusiastically admiring the paintings...was inappropriate too. 'In our culture it implies you don't have those sort of things at home and makes you seem a bit *paysan*,' Frédéric says. A bit of a peasant.¹⁶

This comically one-sided conversation reveals not only that 'the rules' for conversation might be different in the new context, but that getting to know others at a party is not, for the couple Turnbull approaches, the self-evident good that it is for her. One of the strengths of Turnbull's portrayal of French society is the way she captures the diversity of social worlds—not all French gatherings are like this—yet also how styles of interaction that she has grown up with in Sydney don't easily find a purchase in any of the varied social spaces into which she ventures in France.

As Barbara Hanna and Juliana de Nooy point out in a recent paper, Turnbull inverts a convention of anglophone travel writing about France where the spotlight is on the strange or amusing habits of the French, emphasising rather the comic qualities of the figure she cuts herself in French society.¹⁷ Through the medium of Turnbull and Frédéric's post-mortem discussions about what went wrong in her social encounters, the memoir creates a symbolic bridging of the gap between the Australian interloper and her wary, deprecating French audience. We see Frédéric becoming aware that behaviour that seems natural could be culturally inflected, a parallel development to the one that Turnbull herself undergoes.

While she presents her struggles to communicate in a comic light, Turnbull also brings out her frustrated feeling of invisibility in the new language and culture. This is partly a matter of limited vocabulary, but her dislocation is linguistic in a deeper sense, in that cultural expectations about behaviour make themselves felt through underlying scripts for what can or cannot be said, scripts that are largely lost on her. At a reunion lunch for university friends of Frédéric, the hosts seem to ignore her. When another couple greet her warmly—'*Enfin, le kangarou!*'—she feels she could weep with gratitude. Their friendliness, however, which she experiences as a reviving touch of normality, turns out in this cultural context to be an idiosyncratic response. None of Frédéric's other friends at the lunch feel bound to come up with it. Marie, a stylish woman with whom Turnbull

has been trying to chat in French, turns suddenly to Frédéric and asks: “*Et ta petite copine, comment va son français?*” Her words ring across the table, loud and patronising. (“How’s your little girlfriend’s French coming along?”) Frédéric, embarrassed, tries to include Turnbull: ‘Er, I think she can probably answer that herself.’ Faced with what seems like a gratuitous insult and unable to formulate a retort in French, Turnbull takes refuge in the bathroom, crying with mortification.¹⁸

From the retrospective vantage point of several more years in France, Turnbull reads the incident differently. She suggests that in French, Marie’s comment, while hardly kindly meant, would not necessarily have been calculated to wound; that in the middle-class, urban French milieu of the lunch, there was no particular expectation of friendliness towards newcomers. Two years later, Turnbull is on good terms with Marie. The hosts of the lunch who appeared so cold ultimately turn out to be ‘fun and gregarious’. Asked about their initial unfriendliness, they observe: ‘The problem is the French aren’t very comfortable meeting new people...For us, friendships form over years, at school or university. And after that, we’re not interested, we’re no longer curious. We think we’ve got enough friends already.’ For Turnbull, this explanation is ‘somehow healing’ because, as she writes, ‘even though that lunch was more than two years ago now, the cool reception, those unreciprocated what-do-you-do’s, my anger, the hurt, had all accumulated in a knot which needed untangling’.¹⁹

Mateer, *Semar’s Cave*

Semar’s Cave: An Indonesian journal (2004) by Australian poet John Mateer (born in 1971) gives an account of his time as writer-in-residence in Medan in Northern Sumatra, and later in Java. Unlike the cases of Bouras and Turnbull, Mateer’s transnational life predates the travel that is the subject of his book. He was born in Roodenport, South Africa, and migrated to Australia in his late teens, in 1989.²⁰ When Indonesians and Australian expatriates ask him why he is visiting Indonesia, he explains that he hopes to learn about the origins of Cape Malay, one of the languages spoken in the Cape Colony of Southern Africa in the eighteenth century among slaves from the Dutch East Indies, and the language of poetry he found inspiring as a child. Moments in the narrative in which an Indonesian experience triggers a memory of South Africa often have a particularly strong emotional resonance, as when Mateer’s housekeeper in Medan takes him shopping: ‘Squeezed together, with Ibu Enim’s fleshy arm pressing against mine, I feel as though I have slipped back into my childhood: an African nanny taking care of me.’²¹

Figure 15.1: Cover, John Mateer, *Semar's Cave: an Indonesian Journal*.



Courtesy Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Mateer conveys sensations and images memorably: the gurgling of drains at night, the sight and sounds of *becaks* (bike-taxis), motorbikes and yellow *sudakos* in the street, the feeling of being a passenger on all of these. The starkly evocative poems he embeds in the text are especially forceful engagements with place, often creating a productive discomfort in the reader. From a transnational perspective, the most striking aspect of the country portrayed in *Semar's Cave* is its precarious status as a nation, where distinct regional worlds have been forcibly yoked together, a status epitomised in a Chinese Indonesian's saying: '[T]here is nothing else holding Indonesia together—only the army and this language, Bahasa Indonesia.'²² Perhaps Mateer's own transnational trajectory

makes him more receptive to such angles of vision than Australians who write of Indonesia in more straightforwardly national terms, against a background sense of their own country as a unified nation.²³

Mateer is interested in the issue of translation as it relates to poetry and cultural assumptions about the role of poets. He presents himself as frustrated by problems of translation at a poetry reading in Medan at which he has to read out his own poems. A Sumatran poet has chosen the poems Mateer will have to read, and they are not ones he thinks are likely to engage his listeners, whose English he suspects is limited. He is bemused at the lack of fit between what the audience expects a poet to be—someone with a claim to national status—and who he happens to be. Someone asks him why he is not mentioned in a history of Australian literature. Mateer is unwilling to take on the role of cultural representative that he feels is being thrust on him by Indonesians in the audience and Australian officials alike.

Considering his reasons for writing the memoir, Mateer reflects: 'I don't write to present an objective account or a truth but to interrupt the norms of storytelling, travel-writing or even history by giving more detail than opinion; real images instead of my thoughts.'²⁴ The implication is that the reader, presented with these concrete details, can come to his or her own conclusions about the Indonesia portrayed in the book. The idea, however, that one could convey 'real images' without also conveying thoughts about them seems problematic. The book's privileging of images appears to confirm Michael Cronin's observation that 'engaging with the external signs of alterity may...involve less personal risk (signs seen from a distance) than the direct dialogical encounter of language'.²⁵ Mateer's descriptions of his interactions with Indonesians include very little explicit comment; they are almost as pared down as transcripts of a tape recording, a method that could be read as privileging Indonesian voices and giving up any claim to authoritative comment. The attitude that comes through in his reported conversations is, however, generally sceptical and critical, not to say aloof.²⁶

A typical exchange occurs when Mateer is on his way out of Medan, travelling to the town of Berastagi. A man helps him to find a less cramped position at the front of a crowded bus. They talk as they travel:

He's getting married tomorrow to a Batak Karo girl. He works and studies computer science in Medan. He doesn't like Medan. He wants to be a farmer in the mountains. His plan is to work hard, earn a lot of money and then return to his kampong to be a farmer.

'Where is your village?' I ask.

'Ten kilometres from Berastagi. But I stay in Berastagi tonight. You want to come to my wedding tomorrow?'

'Maybe,' I say. I feel odd being invited to the wedding of someone I don't know.

'You have a place for tonight?'

I don't. I wait for his recommendation.

'You stay with my friend. Losmen Sibayak. Like the mountain Sibayak.'²⁷

What is interesting about this dialogue is that Mateer doesn't contextualise either the wedding invitation or his own response to it. There is no acknowledgment that a wedding in Sumatra might be a different kind of event from one in Perth, not necessarily a private occasion. As a result, despite his helpfulness, the man appears intrusive. Mateer seems to transpose his expectations wholesale, making no allowance for cultural difference, as though to do so would be to exoticise.

A particularly pronounced example of this one-sidedness is found in his representation of his Bahasa Indonesia teacher, Harkiman, who is of Chinese descent. We learn that Harkiman studied in New Zealand, where he did a thesis on the poet James Baxter. We later learn that he becomes an important source of knowledge of Indonesian literature for Mateer. Harkiman writes poetry himself and is evidently drawn to Mateer, as a poet and an Australian, someone who provides an indirect link with the world of his studies. The attraction does not seem to be mutual:

He is questioning me. He wants to know why I'm here, how I became published, how I manage to make a living...From his urgency I can tell that he has written poems. 'Tell me,' he asks, 'how do you *become* a poet?'

I evade the question. Its tone was almost aggressive.

As with the man on the bus, Mateer responds to Harkiman's questions as though they were rude, rather than expressive of a different cultural style of interaction, one that does not necessarily assume that there are 'personal' questions that are off-limits. Harkiman asks Mateer what his religion is and 'beams' on learning that it is Buddhism, as he himself is a Buddhist. 'According to him,' writes Mateer, 'this is a wonderful coincidence.' He tells Mateer that he looks forward to their classes. Mateer writes: 'I'm a bit taken aback by his enthusiasm. His forcefulness makes me uncomfortable. I'm relieved when...he rises to go and talk with some other people.'²⁸ The effect of the dialogue is to expose Harkiman as pushy and foolish for imagining a connection with Mateer when there is none. Mateer's discomfort with him is presented as being the natural response to this kind of behaviour. As in the quotations from the memoirs by Bouras and Parks, here there is a resistance to a way of speaking that displays the person's strong feelings, what Mateer calls Harkiman's 'enthusiasm'. This resistance likely has a cultural, as well as a personal, inflection.

During their first class, Harkiman digresses from the language exercises and gives Mateer a 'crash course in Indonesian literature'. He is enthusiastic about Chairil Anwar, Indonesia's first modern poet. Of a major modern poet before Anwar, Amir Hamza, we're told, 'Harkiman has a criticism...an anecdote...and a moral'.²⁹ There's something reductive in the way Mateer classifies what Harkiman says into these three types of utterance. In her searching review of *Semar's Cave*, Amanda Johnson has drawn attention to Mateer's 'remote narratorial stance' that, eschewing 'other people's accounts' as unreliable, 'can only lead to generalised judgements'.³⁰ The narrator's interaction with Harkiman seems to me a prime example of this distanced quality. Mateer goes on:

It is Harkiman's habit to say a lot and then become aware of his impropriety and fall silent for a moment before remembering why we are both here. 'We are supposed to be studying,' he says in frustration. Harkiman, like most people who enjoy poetry, starts talking about it as soon as he meets a like-minded soul. I am sure that my friendship with him will be as it is with all my other poet-friends: a rapid, excited, unending discussion.³¹

The reference to excited discussion comes as a surprise because Mateer's side of the exchange is missing. By not revealing anything potentially vulnerable in his own behaviour, Mateer gives his negative impression of Harkiman an aura of impartiality. We are left wondering if Harkiman's apparent 'sense of impropriety' is really confusion at having failed to elicit much response from his listener.

Conclusion

Mateer's memoir connects in part with the nuanced thinking about nationality proposed by *Transnational Ties*. My chapter, however, aims to complicate the question of what it means to be Australian (or Indonesian) further by bringing in the additional, critical term of 'linguaculture'.³² Nationality, as this book argues, is a complex, shifting phenomenon, but the cultural assumptions travellers bring with them are often the more persistent for being unexamined, embedded as they are in widely shared concepts—such as 'privacy' or 'friendliness'—that are taken for granted by speakers of the same language.

Whereas Turnbull refers confidently to 'national characteristics' of the French, Mateer attempts to steer clear of cultural generalisations while conveying often haunting impressions of place and personal encounter. I would argue, however, that Turnbull's narrative, despite her unsophisticated recourse to the discourse of 'national types', probes more deeply into the cultural dimension of the self than Mateer's. In choosing to present his encounters with a minimum of overt interpretation, Mateer tends to leave his own cultural perceptions intact, showing us how elements of Pratt's 'seeing-man' might be present even in narratives that

are committed to a decolonising vision. Bouras's and Turnbull's greater openness to different styles of emotional expression and interaction, on the other hand, suggests how travel writing in English might go beyond the limitations presented by Pratt, to engage with, and not merely distantly observe, 'cultural others'.

Notes

¹ Dorfman, Ariel 1998, *Heading South, Looking North: A bilingual journey*, Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York; Hoffman, Eva 1989, *Lost in Translation: A life in a new language*, Heinemann, London; Mori, Kyoko 1997, *Polite Lies: On being a woman caught between cultures*, Henry Holt, New York.

² Grewal, Inderpal 1996, *Home and Harem: Nation, gender, empire and the cultures of travel*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC; Holland, Patrick and Huggan, Graham 1998, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical reflections on contemporary travel writing*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor; Kaplan, Caren 1996, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern discourses of displacement*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC; Porter, Dennis 1991, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and transgression in European travel writing*, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Pratt, Mary Louise 1992, *Imperial Eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*, Routledge, London, p. 218. Michael Cronin's excellent *Across the Lines: Travel, language, translation* (2000, Cork University Press, Cork) is an exception to this rule.

³ Bouras, Gillian 1986, *A Foreign Wife*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy, Victoria; Turnbull, Sarah 2002, *Almost French: A new life in Paris*, Bantam Books, Milsons Point, NSW; Mateer, John 2004, *Semar's Cave: An Indonesian journal*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, WA.

⁴ See also Kaplan, *Questions of Travel*; and Holland and Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters*.

⁵ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 226.

⁶ Mateer, *Semar's Cave*, p. 69.

⁷ Bouras, Gillian 1991, *A Fair Exchange*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria; 1994, *Aphrodite and the Others*, McPheeGribble/Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria; 1996, *A Stranger Here*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria; 1999, *Starting Again*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria. See McLaren, John 2001, *States of Imagination: Nationalism, citizenship and multiculturalism in writings from Australia and southern Asia* Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, for a detailed and illuminating discussion of four of these texts.

⁸ Bouras, *Foreign Wife*, p. 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹¹ Parks, Tim 1996 [2001], *An Italian Education*, Vintage, London, p. 142.

¹² Bouras, *Foreign Wife*, p. 124.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁵ Turnbull, *Almost French*, pp. 79, 134, 143.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–5.

¹⁷ Hanna, Barbara and de Nooy, Juliana 2003, 'Travel memoirs and intercultural learning, 'The Intercultural Narrative'', International Association for Language and Intercultural Communication Conference, University of Lancaster, 14–16 December 2003.

¹⁸ Turnbull, *Almost French*, pp. 68–9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 171–2.

²⁰ Arts, *Ethics and Literature*, The Thylazine Foundation Pty Ltd, available from <http://www.thylazine.org/directory/directm/>

²¹ Mateer, *Semar's Cave*, p. 59.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²³ Such as Duncan Graham in his nonetheless insightful *The People Next Door: Understanding Indonesia* (2004, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA). For a perspective closer to Mateer's, see Hoon, Chang-Yau 2006, 'Defining (multiple) selves: reflections on fieldwork in Jakarta', *Life Writing*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 81–102.

²⁴ Mateer, *Semar's Cave*, p. 274.

²⁵ Cronin, *Across the Lines*, p. 83.

²⁶ Australian expatriates in particular come in for a degree of suspicion; they are seen as more or less complicit with neo-colonial power structures. The book conveys Mateer's unease with his own position as the beneficiary of a government-funded cultural exchange program between Australia and Indonesia.

²⁷ Mateer, *Semar's Cave*, p. 170.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67; Johnson, Amanda 2005, 'Passage to Indonesia, Review of John Mateer, *Semar's Cave*', *Meanjin. Tongues: Special issue on translation*, vol. 64, no. 4, pp. 60–9. Mateer published a critical response on the *Meanjin* web site, but as this page of *Meanjin* is updated and features new material now, it is no longer available.

³¹ *Semar's Cave*, p. 56.

³² See Attinasi, John and Friedrich, Paul 1995, 'Dialogic breakthrough: catalysis and synthesis in life-changing dialogue', in Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock (eds), *The Dialogic Emergence of Culture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, pp. 33–53.