

Aurea Mota

Displacement and Global Cultural Transformation: Connecting Time, Space, and Agency in Modernity

How do you go about finding these things that are in some ways about extending the boundaries of the self into unknown territory, about becoming someone else? Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*.

1 Introduction

The year 1936 was the time of a remarkable encounter that did not happen. The writer Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) was visiting Rio de Janeiro for the first-time. At that moment, a young girl was starting to write and make literature a way of understanding the many emotions that a human being can experience. Her name was Clarice Lispector (1920–1977). In an attempt to overcome an unfortunate situation of the family, her father had decided to move with his daughters from Recife to Rio de Janeiro in 1935. In 1936, Clarice Lispector was 16 and Stefan Zweig 55 years old. He was an internationally famous writer who arrived in the city for a short visit. He was given a reception with the status of an official state visitor (Fontanals 2019, 182). Despite the difference in age, gender and status, both were Jews who at different times fled from Eastern Europe to the New World to evade death and persecution.¹ Though they did not meet – at least not

¹ Clarice Lispector arrived in Brazil in 1922 when she was one and a half years old. Her family escaped from Jewish persecution in 1920 from a little village called Chechelnyk, part of Russia at that time, but now part of Ukraine. Clarice regarded herself as fully Brazilian and was annoyed when her nationality was questioned (Ferreira 1999, Gotlib 2011). The family first lived in Maceió. Two years later they moved to Recife, both cities being in the northeast of Brazil. In 1935, after the death of her mother and a worsening of the economic situation of the family, Pedro Lispector moved with his daughters Tania and Clarice to Rio de Janeiro. The other daughter, Elisa, joined the family a short time later. For Portuguese readers, there are two excellent biographies of Clarice Lispector: Nádya Gotlib's *Clarice, Uma Vida que se Conta* (2011) and Teresa Cristina Montero Ferreira's *Eu Sou uma Pergunta: uma Biografia de Clarice Lispector*. For English readers the much-praised book by Benjamin Moser *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* is the best account of her life and work. Of special interest about the experience of Stefan Zweig in Brazil is his book *Brazil, A Land of the Future* (2000 [1941]). It connects his first impression of the country in 1936 with his time as a resident from 1940 to

in the way we understand an encounter as a face-to-face contact – their work bears the mark of their experiences in this particular time and space. Both Clarice Lispector and Stefan Zweig in 1936 saw Brazil, especially Rio de Janeiro, as a space that offered them the possibilities of a better future and the potential for a new horizon of interpretation.

For Clarice Lispector, Rio de Janeiro opened up a literary world that was not available to her in Recife. In Rio she was able to access and read works by international authors which she ferociously consumed, such as Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, as well as Brazilian writers such as Machado de Assis and José de Alencar (Ferreira 1999). For Stefan Zweig, Rio represented a way out of the insanity of fascism and other forms of narrow nationalism that he saw in Europe. In his words, this experience made it possible “[. . .] to escape for a time from a world that was destroying itself, into one that was peacefully and creatively building” (Zweig 2000 [1941], 7). Since his very first visit to Brazil in 1936, Zweig made it clear that he would return to finish a book that he wanted to write about the country. In 1940 he did come back with his second wife, Lotte Altmann (1908–1942), and they both lived there until 1942. They settled in the city of Petropolis where many other German Jews were also living, mostly escaping from Europe for the same reasons. There, in the year of 1941, another meeting with Clarice Lispector could have happened. She went as part of her job as a journalist to visit the Imperial Museum that was under restoration (Moser 2009, 112). In so far as it can be established, they shared the same space at the same time but a face-to-face meeting did not occur. Nonetheless, human encounters that create new social networks and forms of interpretation of the world can happen in many ways.

This anecdote is used to help the reader understand two key points: how the modern temporal experience has been driven by expectations of a better future (Koselleck 2004), and how spaces are related to literary interpretation. Even though much thought has been devoted to the perspective of time and contingency in modernity (Baudelaire 1964; Wagner 2008, for instance), understanding the importance of spaces that are shared during a particular period is one of the research agendas still open in the field of global literary studies. Spaces where life flows are a constitutive part of the way humans understand and interpret the world. To explore this idea further, the temporal and spatial experiences of modernity are examined in this chapter in relation to the general assumption that

1942 when he committed suicide in Petropolis, a city close to Rio de Janeiro. The movie *Stefan Zweig: Farewell to Europe* (2016) is also interesting in relation to his experience in Rio de Janeiro.

the displacement of people and ideas reveals important features of the self-constitution of modernity, especially with regard to the modern interpretation of the world and the meaning of space and time.

I will consider in depth the displacement to different places of the world of two female intellectuals and the entanglements they created. For us, “intellectual”² is a term that should refer to those who dedicated their life – or part of it – to the dissemination of their ideas and interpretations of the world. As Znaniecki (1986 [1940], 21) puts it, intellectuals are people who “for longer or shorter periods of their lives specialise in cultivating knowledge”. My goal is to show that the study of the displacement taken by intellectuals constitutes a very fruitful line to be pursued in studies of global cultural transformations in the modern period. As captured in the epigraph to this chapter, the experience of being in the world and moving through different spaces extends the boundaries of the self and emerges as the most striking source of the interpretation of the world and self-transformation (Solnit 2006). On those grounds, I am advocating both a theoretical and an empirical approach to elucidate the role of displacement for the formation of global cultural transformation. This chapter develops the idea of displacement as (self) transformation and deconstruction, as it appears in the work of Derrida (1978) and extends it to the domain of modern global cultural studies. The argument developed starts from a reflection about to what extent experiences of travelling bring to light the core categories that we use to understand modernity: time, space, and agency.

The chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I will discuss general transformations that happened in the modern period from a historical-sociological point of view. This is a kind of philosophical and conceptual interlude that will help us to frame in broader terms the empirical discussion of this contribution. To understand modern transformations, it is important to see how the attempt to unify different temporalities became embedded in the way “moderns” started to see world history. I will show how influential theories of modernity and concepts of the present still very much lack a broader understanding of different experiences of being in the world. The aim is to find out how key ideas of time and space have been traditionally used in order to see what kind of re-orientation is needed to better understand global literary modernity. The argument of this chapter then is that the concept of displacement can be used to understand the role of intellectuals as cultural mediators and as agents of cultural transfer.

² Before the birth of the term “intellectual,” the terms used to refer to these people were “man of letters” and “philosophers” (Charle 2015 [1990]).

To illustrate the argument about the role of space, displacements, and cultural mediation from a gendered and peripheral perspective, I will analyse in the second section of this chapter the central aspects of the life and work of Nísia Floresta and Clarice Lispector. The selection of these figures is based on: i) an emphasis on the fact that female writers played a central role in the affirmation of the modern global cultural milieu; ii) the fact that they were intellectuals from peripheral countries (both from Brazil) who did not belong to the social or political elite; and iii) the fact that they were figures who did not experience the same kind of success and recognition in their lifetime. While Clarice Lispector obtained recognition of her work during her lifetime, Nísia Floresta remained largely unknown until long after her death – and remains so for contemporary thinkers outside Brazil. Thus, in order to overcome the obsession with success and public recognition observed in mainstream studies of intellectuals (Zelinský 2020), it is also a methodological choice to work with one intellectual that acquired public triumph and another that did not. What they do have in common is that both were part of marginalised groups (females) from a peripheral place (Brazil). The method used for this analysis is what I call geo-biographical approach. It consists of a study of personal life events and works produced by intellectuals to show how global literary connections are created in specific times and spaces by the action of intellectuals – especially ones experiencing displacements– traditionally understood as peripheral. On that basis, the geo-biographical analysis³ of the two intellectuals – Nísia Floresta and Clarice Lispector – shows how displacements and the interpretation of the world offered by the thinkers are connected to the agency of these people and the entanglements created by their movement through different spaces. Finally, some conclusions will be offered to the reader.

2 Time, Space, and Human Agency in Modernity: Towards an Analysis of Displacements

Modernity is a polysemic term that, despite its many meanings in different fields of knowledge, retains the idea of major historical innovation connected to the possibility of expanding the human experience of being in the world

³ This analysis is done using biographical information about the person analysed along with other complementary material (letters exchanged with friends, colleagues, and family members, for instance). The analysis takes the places the person has been to as a variable that elucidates how a change in the interpretation can be connected with the change of space.

(Mota and Delanty 2017). From a historical-sociological point of view, modern ruptures are based on the projection of the idea of societal progress to a time to come – the future. That is why very often we refer to modern horizons and to the modern imaginary as a way of moving beyond the concrete experience of the present (Wagner 2008). This view of the modern as a temporal transformation was developed by Koselleck's (2004) ground-breaking historical analysis of concepts. He showed how the emergence of modernity represented a moment of rupture in which expectations of a better human future became part of historical experience. This temporal transformation is the basis of the modern idea of progress (Wagner 2015) and of many forms of literary understanding that emerged in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, such as Zweig's book *Brazil, A Land of the Future*.

John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, written in 1689, has the famous sentence "In the beginning all the world was America". Locke was a keen reader of travel literature in general but with a special interest in travel narratives from people who had been to Asia and, above all, to the new world on the other side of the Atlantic (Talbot 2010). Travel books on America were used by Locke and many other thinkers of the early modern period as a sort of ethnographic material that informed their philosophical claims (Mota 2015, 2018). In particular, Locke used what he learned from the travel experiences of others to make a very strong statement about how to understand the different temporalities that he saw in the world. He did so by imagining a line in which it would be possible to position the past, the present and the future of the society. The phrase "all the world" makes a strong affirmation about a supposed point of departure that empirically demonstrates, for him, that societies were all at the same level before they started to "develop". For Locke empirical evidence revealed that people were living in a completely different temporality. From his perspective, however, these temporalities could be re-embedded if the Christian civilised areas of the northern world carried out their duty of civilising these different experiences. Travel writings from explorers and missionaries who visited the unknown world from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries informed thinkers who, like Locke, are taken to be the founding fathers of modern western philosophy. The writers of these books and the bridges they created by the action of movement functioned as a cultural mediating process in which different social patterns were re-located. The analysis of this process of cultural transfer through the production and consumption of travel writing is a clear example of how to work with the process of entanglement to overcome the problems of treating different historical realities as isolated units (Werner and Zimmermann 2006).

The view of modernity that emphasises time and space as *universal* and *neutral* categories while assuming that the history of modernity is made up of

comparison between different realities is still present in influential sociological theories, such as that of Anthony Giddens (1990). For Giddens, modernity had its beginning in Europe from approximately the seventeenth century and then spread throughout the world. He sees this process as unburdened by the European perspective of representing/interpreting and imagining the world as an embedded global space. This argument is based on an uncritical understanding of how the North Western perspective became the privileged one for the interpretation and representation of modern cultural transformations.⁴ An adequate view of modernity will need to take the opposite direction to Giddens. As I argue in this chapter, modernity needs to be understood as the formation of a horizon that has been made by a process of connections and divergences connected by the action of cultural mediators such as intellectuals and writers. Even core ideas that are classically inscribed as a product of the European system of knowledge, such as the idea of the world sharing a similar historical time, cannot be fully addressed without bringing to the analysis the experience that comes from other parts of the peripheral world. Alternatively, Mignolo (2011) tried to understand the modern category of time and space beyond this sort of Giddensian-Eurocentric approach. Mignolo's analysis assumes that space and time are fixed categories that structurally determine all the possibilities of action and thought. However, time and space should not be taken as absolute structural systems that do not vary in relation to the historical experiences that a society goes through or the personal experiences a human being has.

Thus, it could be said that modern beings think and act based on where they have been and what they learn from their experiences. This way forward accepts the contributions of transnational studies, as has been proposed by Middell, Espagne, and Geyer (2010), but moves beyond the position of these authors in the direction of overcoming national constraints; to place agency in the movement of human beings as self-cultural mediators. Drawing on empirical

⁴ For Giddens, *distancing* from time and space is what distinguishes the pace of change in modern societies from “traditional” to “pre-modern” ones, in his terms. Giddens sees the change of speed that took place during the modern period as something that happened due to the separation of time and space and their recombination into a distinct social experience. That is, in his perspective, in “pre-modern” societies there was a coincidence between the abstract sphere of social life and the physical area where it took place. This constitutes the basis of what he calls the time-space *distantiation* and of the mechanisms that make it possible to ground social life in these new circumstances. A major dimension of these systems is what he calls *mechanisms of embedment*. They are responsible for the reorganisation of social relations in a situation of distancing between space and time – the physical and the abstract. For this reason, in his approach one of the consequences of modernity is the formation of empty spaces in which social life occurs.

evidence, I will show that important changes that formed the modern interpretation of the literary world are connected to cultural entanglements created through the movement of intellectuals. By looking at the networks created by intellectuals, it is possible to claim that intellectuals act as cultural mediators (Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts 2018) by articulating different perspectives about how we should understand specific cultures and global connections (Espagne 2013). The concept of cultural mediators has been regarded, since the first use of the term, as pertaining to the study of the role of those actors who connect cultures through communication (Taft 1981). Hence, in this view, the process of cultural mediation occurs when there is a means of communicating differences mediated by actors. Following this definition, intellectuals not only exchange ideas and forms of interpretation of the world, but they also act as cultural mediators and as such create channels that connect and transform cultures. It is through the action and experiences of very concrete agents that entanglements are created between different parts of the globe and it is this that also creates the categories that we use to understand our present time. Displaced intellectuals – or intellectuals in displacement – have created networks of interpretation that became an important force in the transformation of the cultural and literary world. Displacement is a practical movement with interpretative and cultural implications.

Consequently, before moving on, it is important to further clarify how the concept of displacement is to be understood. Displaced people are a common way of referring to people who have moved, or people that were expelled or forced to move, from where they settled. In this later use of the term, displacement is connected to the idea of a forced diaspora, exile, and migration, notions which all have in common the sense of being out of place in a negative way. The perspective I have adopted demands a conceptualization of displacement in more general terms as part of an epistemic and interpretative movement. In the elusive and not fully articulated use of the term by Derrida (1978), displacement is related to the Freudian interpretation of dreams, and to his criticism of the “language of presence” that constructs modern discourse and practice. For Derrida, displacement is the possibility of a movement that can turn hierarchy upside down to dislodge a dominant system. For me, displacement is a mechanism of transformation both in terms of a change in a writer’s perspective and in terms of the structure of time and space in which they are inserted. By conceptualising displacement in more general and abstract terms, it can be claimed that the concept has a wider significance in the self-constitution of modernity and enlarges our understanding about the agency of human beings when it comes to the domain of culture. To be *on route* (Clifford 1997) is a condition for the formation of the modern subject and thought.

The scarcity of studies in the social sciences and humanities that combine empirical research with theoretical analysis on the displacement of the intellectual and the changes in their interpretations is surprising. Yet there are a few studies that do, such as Offe's *Reflections on America: Tocqueville, Weber and Adorno in the United States* by (2005), Scaff's *Max Weber in America* (2011), and Nolan's *What They Saw in America* (2016). These three authors develop different approaches to how "America," understood by them only as the United States of America, has played an important role in the work of some male European thinkers. These works are, nevertheless, limited. First because there is no connection between the analysis of the displacement and the intellectual production of the analysed thinkers. It can be explained because they did not regard movement as part of the knowledge process, and as part of a broader historical process. Secondly, the meaning of "America" for each of these authors is different because of the transformations historically produced in the New World in its relationship with the Old World. This distinction came with the process of divergence of the Americas in the nineteenth century; the separation of North from South America (Mota 2015). And thirdly, no female intellectuals are analysed at all. For instance, these works largely ignored the importance of Weber's partner, Marianne Weber, and other women in the process of displacement and production of knowledge.

The relationship between displacement (without using the term) and knowledge was addressed by Euben (2006), who sees the act of travelling as a necessary condition for the production of theory, which, for her, is the main manifestation of knowledge. Euben's insights about how spatial displacement is connected to knowledge is important, but also limited because she is concerned only with the production of theories. There is no mention of interpretation and cultural transformation in her account. In another vein, following the path of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), several studies have addressed the representation of the Other under conditions of modern colonial domination. Travel writings that arose within different structures of modern colonial domination have been analysed in order to show they basically served the purpose of a representation of the Other that corresponded to the European colonial imaginary, see *Belated Travellers* (Behdad 1994) for instance. In the same vein, it is also worth mentioning the work *Imperial Eyes* (Pratt 2008) and the well-known article by Appadurai, "Putting Hierarchy in its Place" (1988). These works are fundamental texts for understanding the process of colonial domination and the connections it established in modernity. However, the movement and representation of the Other should not be seen only as a one-way process or as something that was simply used to impose the perspective of the European coloniser. The movement of people from other parts of the colonial, dominated

world to Europe also played an important part in the interpretation of the meaning of global cultural modernity and thus also needs to be scrutinised. Appadurai's claim that the "natives did not travel," as well as the idea that the colonial perspective crystallised only in the perspective of the coloniser, must be questioned. We have been too used to attributing agency of travel and exploration only to white European men, although things have not always been exclusively like that (see for instance Franco 2007). To be *on route* is an important part of the action of thinkers and writers.

Though it is not new to attribute agency to humans in general to understand modernity, intellectuals and scientists have been seen as quite fixed subjects (Zelinský 2020). However, this view of intellectuals as people detached from reality but at the same time very much conditioned by the structures in which they are inserted can be misleading. This image does not correspond to what these mobile subjects have done in terms of network creation and cultural transfers. To use a term that became known by the work of Karl Mannheim on the study of intellectuals, these subjects have been seen as capable of becoming *unattached* to ideology, but that is not the same as detached from the social life they create by their action. The creativeness and freedom of the mind is a product of what Mannheim sees as intellectual dynamism and a state of flux (Mannheim 2013 [1929], 139). Intellectuals are people that create meaning and social networks (Zelinský 2020, 4). They do so by their movement, which encompasses their performative interventions as well as the products of their mind. In the next section we will see how displacements have created cultural connections and changed the interpretation of two female authors in different times and spaces of the modern period.

3 Displacement and Cultural Transformation: Women Writers *on Route*

The analysis of major life events alongside an interpretation of the work produced by an intellectual from a historical sociological point of view represents a twofold challenge: first, it is difficult to measure the real impact of an action/event on a time that has passed; second, and even more difficult and hazardous, is to attribute a relation of causality between the action and the final product that is under analysis. These are, however, general issues that any researcher who deals with past events needs to accept. In any event, to make clear the way that I deal with these challenges, it is important to mention that the geo-biographical approach developed here is not intended to give an exclusive explanation of the way that

an interpretation of the world has been produced by an author. However, it does aim to show that there is a relation between the displacement that a person experienced at a specific time and space, and their intellectual production. Thus, displacements are taken as explanatory factors to understand the production of a literary interpretation in a specific time. In any case I am far away from advocating that, by itself, it can explain the idea that the author expresses. Context and creativity, for instance, matter, just as other structural factors, including the economic, gender, racial, and social circumstances that mark the life of a human being. This should be borne in mind in the following analysis.

Nísia Floresta was born in Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil in 1810. At that time, it was a place far away from the more vibrant southern part of the country, but close enough to Atlantic connections because of its strategic position. Floresta was what can be termed a complete thinker and writer – she wrote poems, novels, newspaper articles and texts in the field of human sciences related to women’s condition and education.⁵ In terms of personal stories, her life was very hard, she was even forced to get married when she was 13 years old. This forced marriage lasted for less than a year before she left her husband’s house. With her parents, she moved to Recife trying to escape from the shame and from persecution by her ex-husband. Recife was at that point a well-developed city in the northeast of Brazil. It was there that she published in 1831 her first writing in the form of newspaper contributions about the condition of women in Brazil. A year later, when she was 22 years old, Floresta managed to publish her first book, *Direito das Mulheres e Injustiça dos Homens*. She claimed it was a free translation of the book *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* written by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. However, this is not correct. She actually made the translation of the book *Woman Not Inferior*, published originally in 1739. Pallares-Burke (1996), who first investigated this episode, argues that Nísia Floresta probably used what she calls a “literary trick” because she thought it was a more fruitful way of disseminating the kind of female perspective she wanted to see developed in Brazil.

5 She wrote 15 books that were translated into English, French and Italian, most of which were translated shortly after the publication of the original. However, it is quite surprising that her work is not widely known in Brazil or in Europe. A list with her publications includes: *Direitos das mulheres e injustiça dos homens*, 1832; *Conselhos à minha filha*, 1842; *Daciz ou a jovem completa*, 1847; *Fany ou o modelo das donzelas*, 1847; *A lágrima de um Caeté*, 1847; *Dedicação de uma amiga*, 1850; *Opúsculo humanitário* (translated to English as *Humanitarian Brochure*), 1853; *Páginas de uma vida obscura*, 1855; *A Mulher*, 1859; *Trois ans en Italie, suivis d’un voyage en Grèce*, 1870; *Le Brésil*, 1871; *Fragments d’un ouvrage inédit: notes biographiques*, 1878.

In terms of network connections, Floresta managed to establish, through the publication of her book and through her trip to different parts of Brazil, the beginning of a social network connecting people that shared a common interest in the condition of women. Thus, she inaugurated a primordial form of what we understand as feminism in the country. Limited in her own time and by the conditions of communication, she managed to create bridges to strengthen the discussion about the place of women compared to that of men, specifically in the national context, and to connect with contributions from women in other countries, such as Mary Wollstonecraft. She used literature and the human sciences to put Brazil into the flow of the global cultural female connections that was emerging at that time. However, I need to contextualise the kind of female perspective Floresta was disseminating. As Franco (2007) shows, she was still very much advocating the recognition of women as the moral structure of a family. She strongly condemned every attempt to make women equal to men when it came to their public roles. For instance, she was very much worried about the fact that in Europe women were taking part in leisure activities such as playing cards in public.

In 1849 she travelled for the first time to Europe. From this experience, she published many texts, mostly in the form of novels and travel books. She compared Europe and Brazil in many of these works. It is important to notice that, indeed, her critique of slavery in Brazil is connected to the way European civilization created an unequal colonial structure. Floresta was strongly opposed to theories about the genetic/racial inferiority of blacks in relation to whites that were in vogue at the time. She reiterates a critique of the Europeans' inability to deal with the racial hierarchization of the world in many parts of the book *Trois ans en Italie, suivis d'un voyage en Grèce* (1870). For example:

The black race itself [. . .] upon which the most absurd prejudices and the atrocious tyranny of the white race still weigh, would, in general, furnish proof of the truth of my assertion [. . .]. How often have I had occasion to see, in these unfortunate victims of the usurpation and avarice of civilised men, traits of virtue and elevation of soul that we would honour in the greatest heroes of the white race! (Floresta 1998 [1980], 258).⁶

⁶ Author translation from the original in Portuguese: “A própria raça negra [. . .], essa raça, digo-o, sobre a qual pesam ainda os preconceitos mais absurdos e a atroz tirania da raça branca, forneceria, em geral, uma prova à verdade de minha asserção [. . .]. Quantas vezes tenho tido ocasião de constatar, nessas infelizes vítimas da usurpação e da avareza dos homens civilizados, traços de virtude e elevação de alma que honrariamos maiores heróis da raça branca!”.

Already enriched by the experience of living in different parts of Brazil, Floresta developed a sense of social justice that was based on race and gender. In her view, no human being was inferior to another because of these characteristics. By analysing Floresta's writings before and after her trip to Europe, it can be said that her sense of the inequalities existing at that time between men and women became even more embedded with other social themes, like the issue of inclusion and exclusion in the formation of modernity.

By looking at what she considered to be the cultural advantage of Europe, she grasped a fundamental contradiction in what Europeans were doing in the newly explored areas of the world. Before her first trip to Europe in 1849 she wrote about the situation of women in Brazil in relation to other parts of the world and about the subjugation of indigenous people by white colonisers. This is the theme of her poem *A Lágrima de um Caeté* 1847 (*The Tear of a Caeté*).⁷ This view was transformed into, and encompassed by, a much stronger sense of critique of the racial situation of her time when she observed the contradictions of European society with her own eyes. It is due to this spatial displacement that she started to create a temporal image of Brazil as being the land of the present/future in contrast with Europe, which in her opinion belonged to the past.

As well as this, an exceptional event happened while she was living in France. Before returning to Brazil, in 1851, she attended a course entitled *General History of Humanity* given by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) in Paris and, from that moment on, she began to establish a friendship and an intellectual exchange with him that would continue to be a strong bond until Comte's death. She returned to Brazil for a short while in the 1850s and while there published her most renowned book *Opúsculo Humanitário* in 1853 (*Humanitarian Brochure*) which had a focus on the education of women and equality between sexes. This book was also well received in the most positivist European circles, including by Auguste Comte himself, who actively appreciated the contribution that she had made. Moreover, it was also important that Floresta used her connections to blame Europeans, who did not have a deep experience of the New World, for creating the false image of this area as uncivilised and backward.

⁷ In this poem of 712 verses Floresta breaks with the Romantic view that prevailed at her time. She shows the clearly indigenous person to be unsatisfied with their subjugated position. This poem was translated into French by the important Italian writer of the second half of the nineteenth century Ettore Marcucci. He wrote the preface to the translation, in which he expressed his appreciation of Nísia Floresta's work, as well as many notes explaining the specific vocabulary of the poem. He was clearly thoughtful about how to properly transfer the ideas from one cultural context to the other.

She was extremely annoyed with the way Europeans described the rest of the world based on false information. In her own words:

[. . .] a modern traveller who knew nothing about Brazil beyond Rio de Janeiro, where he stayed for a few days, presumes to have thoroughly known everything else. [. . .] This continent and its people have such a great difference in climate, habits, and customs that they can only be known after a long time, by travelling a lot with an observant and impartial spirit. With all this, some extravagant or malevolent brains, who only covered a minimal part of it, took delight in flowering their narratives with false anecdotes, and with quirks used to make Europeans laugh, without realising that they were committing two great faults in this way: first, lack of love for a people by whom they were always welcomed, and often enriched; second, to betray the truth, leaving readers in complete ignorance of an important country, called to hold a high place among modern nations. (Floresta 1997 [1859], 26–27)⁸

It is important to emphasise this point because Floresta transmitted her views about how Europeans have been wrongly representing the world to the cultural circles that she got involved with in France, above all through her connection with Auguste Comte. After her first short trip to Europe in 1849, she returned to Europe at the end of 1850 and stayed mostly in France until her death in 1885 in the city of Rouen. It is from this second displacement that most of her ideas flourish. Still, she can be seen as a cultural mediator who translated the Brazilian experience to Auguste Comte. It is not by chance that Brazil and France adopted positivism in the nineteenth century as a symbol of national development. It is possible to understand the cultural and historical transformation of global modernity by following the displaced writers who did great work self-mediating their intellectual production. When a movement starts, both the point of departure and the destination become not only connected, but also transformed.

8 Author translation from the original in Portuguese: “[. . .] um viajante moderno que do Brasil nada conheceu além do Rio de Janeiro, onde permaneceu por poucos dias, presume ter conhecido a fundo todo o resto. [. . .] Este continente o as suas variadas populações têm uma tão grande diferenciação de clima, de hábitos e de costumes, que não se podem conhecer senão após longo tempo, nele viajando muito e com um espírito observador e imparcial. Com tudo isto, alguns cérebros extravagantes ou malévolos, que dele percorreram apenas uma mínima parte, deleitam-se em florear suas narrações com falsas historietas, e com argúcias empregadas para fazer rir aos Europeus, sem se darem conta de que assim cometem duas grandes faltas: primeira, carecer de amor para com um povo por quem foram sempre bem acolhidos, e amiúde enriquecidos; segunda, trair à verdade, deixando os leitores numa completa ignorância a respeito de um importante país, chamado a manter um alto posto entre as nações modernas.”

Leaving the nineteenth century but keeping with the same line of the argument, the Brazilian woman writer whose work is one of the most translated, according to Brazilian National Library data, Clarice Lispector, was a young undistinguished writer when she published her first novel in December 1943.⁹ Prior to that, she had written short pieces while working as a journalist for the Brazilian National Agency¹⁰ during the years 1940–1941 and for the newspaper *A Noite* where she started a collaboration that lasted for several years. It is not too audacious to say that the most important thing she got from the experience as a journalist was to get closer to other writers who, like her, wanted to transform their personal experience into literature. Her friendship with other literary figures, especially Lúcio Cardoso¹¹ started at this time and most of these friendships lasted her entire life. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Clarice's move to Rio de Janeiro opened up many literary doors that would not have been possible while living in Recife.

Despite this, when Clarice first left Brazil in 1944 she was still a person without a known identity outside her own familiar environment. She left the country just a few months after her first novel *Perto do Coração Selvagem* (*Near to the Wild Heart*) was published in December 1943. Clarice went to Italy as the wife of an early career diplomat sent on a mission to Naples in the last years of the Second World War. It was from the exchanges of letters with friends and with her two sisters, Tania and Elisa, that she heard, while living abroad, what Brazilian readers were thinking about the novel. She would write far away from her native public for most of her life (Ferreira 1999). At that moment, she was experiencing a new life

9 In the recommendation letter that the editor Chico Barbosa wrote to a publisher trying to get her first book contract, he wrote the following: “She is entirely unknown, she is almost a girl. But I think she has written a strong novel, although I don’t think it is done very well from beginning to end, but it is a strong novel” (Ferreira 1999, 95 – author translation from the original in Portuguese: “Ela é inteiramente desconhecida, é quase uma menina. Mas acho que escreveu um forte romance, embora ache que não seja muito bem realizado do começo ao fim, mas é um romance de impacto”). Of course, from this beginning, Clarice became one of the most important Brazilian writers of the twentieth century. She wrote more than 20 books including novels, short stories and children’s books, and much has been written about her life and work. For a full list, see Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarice_Lispector.

10 A public institution that was part of the *Department of the Press and Propaganda* created in the dictatorship period known as the “New State” (1937–1945), during the Getúlio Vargas government.

11 Born in Curvelo in 1912 and died in Rio de Janeiro in 1968. He is one of the most important Brazilian writers of the first half of the 20th century. He wrote novels, plays and poems. Clarice and Lúcio developed a friendship that lasted for their entire life. Lúcio also acted as an important mediator that helped Clarice to become connected with the Brazilian intellectual circle as well as assisting her in finding publishers.

outside Brazil, but her novel was left behind. Clarice Lispector was displaced both in time and space and this experience marked her interpretation of people and the world around her for her whole life. This experience was not easy, and we can feel it in the following passage from a letter she sent to Lúcio Cardoso on the 13th August 1947, just a few months after arriving in Berna with her husband on another diplomatic mission:

It is sad to be out of the land where we grew up, it's horrible to hear foreign languages around us, everything seems rootless; the main reason for things is never shown to a foreigner, and the residents of a place stare at us as if we were irrelevant. For me, if it is as good as a medicine is for health to see other places and other people, then it has long since gone from the good to the bad; I never thought I was so unadaptable, I never thought I would need so much of the things I own. (Ferreira 1999, 145–146).¹²

Although this excerpt shows how bad Clarice Lispector felt about being abroad, she also recognises the many good experiences she had after leaving Brazil. In Italy, for instance, she met many important artists, including the painter Giorgio De Chirico (1888–1978) who painted her portrait. She also met the Italian writer Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888–1970) who in a letter to her said that he would like to publish Clarice's first novel in Italian. The translation of parts of the novel was made by Ungaretti's daughter (Gotlib 2011, 25). With Ungaretti, Clarice clearly created a cultural connection. He said to her in a letter of July 1945 that he was trying to catch up with his knowledge about Brazil since he met her.

Clarice finished her second novel *O Lustre (The Chandelier)* in 1945. This book presents the main character, Virginia, as someone who cannot escape from the memories of her childhood while looking for herself as an adult (Lispector [1946] 2020). Virginia, as Clarice herself, experiments with a feeling of strangeness represented by the search for herself in a different time and space. Clarice had this experience while living in Italy. That time was also difficult because she could not manage to get her work published by herself. She needed to count on the help of her sisters and friends in Brazil to get the publication ready. It should be noticed, however, that Clarice Lispector was never very

12 Author translation from the original in Portuguese: “É ruim estar fora da terra onde a gente se criou, é horrível ouvir ao redor da gente línguas estrangeiras, tudo parece sem raiz; o motivo maior das coisas nunca se mostra a um estrangeiro, e os moradores de um lugar também nos encaram como pessoas gratuitas. Para mim, se foi bom, como um remédio é bom para a saúde, ver outros lugares e outras pessoas, já há muito está passando do bom, está no ruim; nunca pensei ser tão inadaptável, nunca pensei que precisa tanto das coisas que possuo”.

lucky in her attempt to publish her novels in Brazil. Later on, she recognised that, at first, it was easier for her to get published outside Brazil (Ferreira 1999). The connections that Clarice created in Europe were long lasting and were fruitful to her and the people she met. However, she was not always comfortable with the position of being the wife of a diplomat. As she attested in many letters that she wrote to her friends and family in Brazil, she learned how to live the lie, making the appearance that everything was right and looking after the social life of her husband while leaving herself in a secondary position. However, this did not stop the compulsion to write. On the contrary, it seemed as if her characters took on too much of Clarice's own feigned way of life. It was while living in Berna that Clarice wrote her third novel *A Cidade Sitiada* (*The Besieged City*) (1949). As one of her critics points out, it seemed as if she needed to write this novel to revise her memories from faraway, from a different time and space (Ferreira 1999, 161). Clarice also followed her husband for a shorter diplomatic mission to the United Kingdom (Torquay, from September 1950 to March 1951) and a very long one to the United States of America (Washington, from 1952 until 1959). In 1959 she left Washington with her two sons to return to Rio de Janeiro and soon after that she got divorced from her husband who remained in the USA.

As was also the case with Nísia Floresta, Clarice Lispector changed her perspective of the world. Her writings owe much to the many forms of displacement she went through. Lispector produced her own literary identity and form of interpretation due to the many forms of displacement she went through between Brazil, Europe, and the USA. However, it was not only for her that the perspective had changed. These travels created a web of exchange and connections that transformed the perspectives of others as well. Clarice, for instance, was invited to give a lecture at the University of Austin in 1963. Her talk was entitled "Vanguard Literature in Brazil" and was very well received by the audience (Gotlib 2009). Trying to define what she understood by vanguard literature, Clarice said that "all true life is experimentation" and "vanguard is experience" (Lispector 2007, 77). One could say that this idea beautifully expresses the meaning for her of all the experiences in her life.

By the application of the geo-biographical methodological approach, we can analyse both the aspects of the personal life, and the interpretation offered by an intellectual. And that is what I have done in this part of the chapter by discussing both the life events and literary achievements of these two female intellectuals. We can see that it is impossible to understand the work of neither Nísia Floresta nor Clarice Lispector without analysing their circulation and connections. So these examples show that the spatial experience that comes with the process of displacement is a constitutive part of the modern structure of

knowledge and interpretation. Displacements and personal experience are not merely external factors with little influence on the production of a literary or even a scientific interpretation of the world, they are key factors for the understanding of human intellectual development.

4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have developed the idea of displacement into a concept that helps us to understand how time and space become connected through the agency of intellectuals by creating entanglements that shape global literary constellations in the past and in the present. The path that we followed started by presenting an anecdote about a meeting that did not happen between Clarice Lispector and Stefan Zweig in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Petrópolis at the end of the first half of the 20th century. This anecdote opened the door to the point I wanted to make about how spatial experiences need to be related to interpretation. Although as far as we know Lispector and Zweig did not have a face-to-face meeting, they became influenced by the connections and experiences they both had at that same time in these cities. The chapter then moved to a discussion about how modernity is connected to the transformation of the experience of time and, as I want to claim, also to the transformation in the perspective of space. I adopted a gendered and peripheral approach to understand how global literary modernity has been formed and transformed by the action of less well-known actors, and to do this we considered the life and work of Nísia Floresta and Clarice Lispector.

Following from this, the first conclusion I would like to draw is that one of the arguments we should avoid when analysing the work of female writers is that their creativity and innovation came from the fact that they were “ahead of their time”. This argument denies the role of the experience they had, the difficulties they went through, and the broader social context into which they were inserted. The connection of different temporal experiences is one of the main exchanges that these authors created as a result of their sense of displacement, as the example of Nísia Floresta shows when she talked about the temporal difference that in her view marked Europe (the past) and Brazil (the present and the future), or when the character Martim in the novel *A Maçã no Escuro* (The Apple in the Dark) discovers based on his own experience that circular time exists (1961 [2019], 177). Nísia Floresta and Clarice Lispector were both products of the personal and collective experiences they created in different spaces and times. Through these experiences, they created social networks and forms of cultural exchange during the process of entanglement created by their displacement.

The geo-biographical analysis of Clarice Lispector and Nísia Floresta shows how we can analyse displacements and the cultural entanglements created by intellectuals as constitutive of the global literary world. These intellectuals are neither out of their space (detached from social reality) nor out of their time (they are part of the traditional old elites or part of the artistic avant-garde). They are situated in a specific historical context that demonstrates that they are formed by the relations they have established in the different spaces they have experienced and with the different historical temporalities they brought together. The action of intellectuals as cultural mediators created networks of interpretation that became an important force in the advancement of the cultural and literary world. Displacement thus is a practical movement with interpretative and cultural consequences.

In relation to the idea of modernity as offering a general framework to analyse displacement and global cultural transformation, there is another important conclusion that needs to be highlighted. Both in the early modern period and in the period of the consolidation of modernity in the nineteenth century the desire to know, interpret and transform the world through temporal and spatial displacement has been equally important. However, from the nineteenth century onwards, spatial displacement and experience became regarded as a secondary factor in thinking about intellectual and scientific production. Displacements that gave rise to the interpretation of the world came to be seen as a matter of personal experience. This can be explained by the process of divergence between a philosophy of experience and meaning from a philosophy of knowledge, reason and interpretation (Foucault 2001). With the consolidation of the modern structure of knowledge, the recognition of the role of displacement that the romantics had no problem with became something to be kept apart from interpretation and scientific knowledge. However, as we saw in this chapter, the literary and the scientific world is completely entwined with the displacements intellectuals have experienced. Being in the world and moving through different spaces is vital for understanding how people have been interpreting and acting in the world into which they are inserted. Even the most abstract theories are all, in the end, the fruits of constant fieldwork that come with the many processes of displacement that marked the lives and interpretation of modern intellectuals.

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