Editorial introduction:
ec/centric affinities: locations, aesthetics, experiences

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Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience
ed. Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy Rowe

Ec/centric Affinities: Locations, Aesthetics, Experiences

Contemporary art is embedded within the very structures that characterise globalization – from the transnational circulation of artworks as commodities to the cross-cultural exchange of images, objects and ideas. Contemporary artists traverse the same routes as empowered, metropolitan elites and the economic migrants left in their wake, and, arguably, the territories described by these global circuits are always, already gendered. The specificity of women’s encounters with globalization thus tend to be marginalised, or subsumed within, masculine-normative accounts in the literature.¹

Attending to women’s particular engagements with globalization is to explore their ec/centric experiences as a means by which to survey the dynamics of transnational migration, circulation and exchange from beyond the centre - from the edges and borders - of mainstream narratives. Such attention involves disarticulating eccentricity from its negative associations with deviation and abnormality and understanding it instead as a term that implies both ‘not agreeing’ and relating to something ‘that has its axis, its point of support…otherwise than centrally placed.’²

As the present collection of essays demonstrates, contemporary women’s art practices provide one such angled view of the myriad effects of globalization on visual and material culture at the locus of situated, sexed subjectivity. This angled,
sometimes edgy, viewpoint does not posit an artificial 'outside' to globalization, but rather, enables embodied and embedded subjects to articulate their specificity in and through resonant, *eccentric affinities*, even within structures that ordinarily favour homogeneity. Emphasising both the angled, 'ec-centric', position of women within globalization and the connections that can be drawn between them (their ‘affinities’) is a consistent strategy within this anthology. Affinities concern likeness, attraction and communities of interest or sympathy; there is, in affinity, no absolute resolution of difference, reduction to consonance or to ‘the same’, but rather, there is an acknowledgement of the importance, politically, intellectually and creatively, of connection and dialogue. The positions this book explores are multi-valent, multi-layered and multi-faceted, but their edges and angles can coincide and connect, rather than repel, as they engage us in the worlds they make.

Focusing on the idea of eccentric affinities, the present volume takes *location* seriously, neither underestimating its importance in the mutual constitution of places and subjects, nor in the articulation of complex and multifaceted identities. Significantly, the essays that comprise this anthology never assume location to be singular and, in very different ways, each demonstrates the intellectual and creative potential offered by engaging with multiple *locations* – conceptual, methodological and, of course, geopolitical.

Operating within highly contested academic and political terrain, *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience* treads its conceptual location carefully. There are various terms deployed within the essays collected in this volume that
seek to describe the complex encounters between women, the arts and the processes of globalization that each explores. The volume as whole, therefore, neither eschews difficult terms such as *postcolonial, diasporic, migratory, transnational, transcultural* and *globalization*, nor does it merely accede to simplistic or over-determined readings that assume these terms to be *a priori* categories of meaning. Instead, each chapter mobilises its terms within the frame of its own specific encounter; the volume as a whole thus acts as a *conversational location*, where meanings are in process and dialogic, rather than fixed and determinate. The eccentric frame of the volume enables the terms to suggest a charged middle-ground, an intersectional ‘in-between’ occupied by women and the arts, that signifies difference, the occluded other and the space of identities performed in and through repetition, reiteration and revision.

The significance of movement and mutable meanings-in-process to both postcolonial and feminist theory marks one of the key eccentric affinities of this anthology. Many of the locational terms that are significant within the essays in the collection are associated with literal and figurative border-crossings, not least ‘transnational’ and ‘diasporic’. In electing to use these terms here, we acknowledge their mobility or, as Deborah Cherry so aptly argues with regard to the term ‘diasporic’ in her essay in this volume, that it is a travelling concept;’ it travels ‘across disciplines, times and cultures.’ Etymologically derived from *dia* [through] and *speirein* [to sow or scatter], the term has most frequently been associated with the movement, displacement and resettling of Jewish people from Israel. Yet as Nicholas Mirzoeff noted, the emphasis on the diasporic in the writings of a wide range of cultural commentators from the 1990s onwards led to a
reconsideration of the boundaries, definitions and uses of the term as applied to other global cultures within the context of postcolonial criticism and theory.³

Significantly, focusing on conceptual mobility emphasises the processes that comprise migratory agency, rather than positing a definition of migration or diasporas per se. This dialogic approach opens this volume to the ebbs and flows of globalization, itself understood less as a fixed entity and more as multilayered and multivalent processes of circulation and exchange. As Arjun Appadurai has observed, ‘in the postnational world…diaspora runs with and not against, the grain of identity, movement and reproduction.’ The concepts of mobility and transience underpinning Women, the Arts and Globalization, are particularly appropriate to describe the fluidity of contemporary social and cultural life in the west.⁴ Thus, we would agree that transnational and cross-cultural encounters between different exiles, migrants and diasporas characterise the contemporary world in which former binaries of centre and periphery have been replaced ‘by a global pattern of flows and resistances’ and the significance of eccentric experience.⁵

Exploring these processes of circulation and exchange bring the macro into vital connection with the micro: global activities impact at the level of the local, the personal is political. For feminists, this is hardly a novel insight, but interrogating eccentric, migratory identities and the experience of globalization in light of feminist theory refocuses our attention onto the dynamic encounter between the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’ where subjects are marked by multiple differences. There is a vital connection between politics and aesthetics in the work brought together by this volume. It is clear that women artists and scholars concerned with
interrogating the significance of gender and sexual difference in the geopolitical contexts of globalization are not afraid to make explicit their political and ethical imperatives. One of the more marked ‘eccentric affinities’ within Women, the Arts and Globalization is, in fact, the question of the legacy of feminist activist and socially-committed practice. Far from declaring this a ‘post-feminist’ age, the work in this anthology reaffirms the importance of the arts to the production of gendered cultural identity and civil society – to the formation of global citizenship through justice and equality that can recognise difference.

Articulating the distinctive and located subject positions that women occupy as global citizens, denizens or migrants, the works explored in this anthology remind us that intersectional agency emerges through the productive interaction between individuals and society – through the micro and macro encounters of intersubjectivity. This, in turn, commits us to engaging with processes of subjectification that are effected in and through making art: rather than assuming that art represents subjects or expresses identity, we are concerned with women’s art practices as a location through which subjects-in-process make and re-make the world.

The epistemological challenges of feminist theory – specifically, the proposition that all knowledge is produced from a perspective, is located, and, more powerfully, that ‘knowledges are practices’ - led to a number of critical editing decisions concerning the disciplinary and methodological framework of Women, the Arts and Globalization. We are aware that as editors we are implicated within the very arguments concerning discipline and method that this volume raises in its
varied explorations of women’s art and globalization. That is, we are as involved in the making of the connected, global futures we envisage as the authors of the essays collected within the volume whose work has challenged, engaged and moved us.

One critical decision was to encourage the inclusion of very different kinds of texts within the anthology, rather than to homogenize them with simplistic editorial mechanisms, such as a specified word length or ‘house style’. We have sought to enable a multilayered textu(r)ality, or polyphonic conversation, to be located within the volume as a whole, by enabling auto/biography and distinctive ‘disciplinary’ voices to emerge. Hence, the work indebted to social science/political theory reads differently from the work more aligned with art theory and interpretation; some essays take a dialogic, interview form, countering a singular authorial/narrative voice, whilst others use a micro-level mode of ‘close reading’ to demonstrate the power of particular works of art to provide new understandings of transnational and transcultural, gendered aesthetics. We would argue that coherence is not homogeneity; the selected texts speak to our theme not because of a forced unity of content, form or perspective but because of an absolute commitment to acknowledge the location of the writing – in or through a personal examination of migration, gender and identity, in or through a practical, affective engagement with art and, as we discuss at greater length later in this introduction, in or through the UK as a primary nexus in the global economy.

The book’s structure is not strictly conventional, in art historical terms, but it is a rigorous rethinking of some of the territories most associated with art’s histories,
theories and practices. No longer a discipline confined to the realms of self-referential iconographic interpretation and fine art connoisseurship, contemporary art history has been enriched by the possibilities of cultural, aesthetic, social and ethical interpretations of works of art enabled by recognising affinities with other disciplines and engaging their methodological tools and perspectives to new ends. As editors we have deliberately maintained the diversity of our contributors’ approaches to, conversations with, and interpretations or critiques of, women’s art practices and these disciplinary crossings again implicate the volume in a critical encounter with location.

Academic research by humanities scholars and social scientists sits alongside practice-led research by artists and transcriptions of ‘interviews’ (conversations/dialogues) with practitioners that demonstrate how art is becomes the substance of intellectual enquiry in its own right. Some texts argue for paradigm shifts in disciplines, fields or methodologies, others provide first-hand accounts of making art as a border-crossing activity that opens quite particular research questions in its material engagement with subjects and society. From a disciplinary perspective then, Women, the Arts and Globalization is located at the interstices of conventional fields, ranging from social science, ethnography, political theory and public policy studies, to feminist critical theory, visual culture, cultural studies, art history and practice-led research in the arts. Yet despite the deliberate inclusion of multivalent voices as appropriate to the heterogeneity of the subject matter, self-reflexive subjectivity and elements of auto/biography remain pertinent to all of the contributions. A shared concept of the contingency of subjective identities and how they impact on the possibilities for active agency and
potential change within transnational and global contexts informs the ‘eccentric’ locations from which all of our contributors ‘speak’.

Geographically, *Women, the Arts and Globalization* brings transnational feminist theory and criticism together with women’s art practices in a discussion of the legacy and trajectory of aesthetics, gender and identity from a specifically anglo-global perspective. We are not alone in selecting a single geo-cultural focal point through which to concentrate a complex set of discussions on the phenomenon of globalization – and not alone in recognising the significance of the Anglophone context within the macropolitics of transcultural exchange and circulation. For example, a specific focus on the UK as the perspective from which issues of the global and transnational might be reflected upon is one that has informed the work of leading cultural theorist Paul Gilroy during the past two decades or more.⁷ For Gilroy, and others such as Stuart Hall and Kobena Mercer, Britain’s post-imperial reconfiguration since the end of Empire has offered peculiarly fertile ground for a microcosmic analysis of the effects of postcolonialism on the contested concept of the nation-state. Gilroy has consistently analysed the contribution that its diasporic subjects make to a renewed culture of conviviality in Britain, highlighting both the losses and gains required to balance the political demands of an effective multiculturalism against the forces of reactionary nationalism and entrenched conservatism.⁸

Mica Nava argued a similar case for the UK as a locus through which to explore what she called ‘visceral cosmopolitanism’, an embodied openness to difference and ‘others’ that belied the conservatism of British political responses to
decolonisation and immigration in the middle and late 20th Century. Significantly, in her work, Nava countered the assumption that the most prominent effect of mass immigration on British culture was negative – the rise of racist nationalism and conservative, exclusionary immigration policies. Rather, she looked to the cultural sphere and to local exchanges between specific groups of people throughout the country, and found overwhelming evidence that an equally significant impact had been the establishment of a positive and lasting legacy of cross-cultural exchange.

The work discussed briefly above enables us to posit two key elements of our argument here - that the UK’s *centrality* (its ‘centricity’) within the processes and structures that commonly define globalization is both an awkward legacy of the disintegration of the British Empire and a fascinating location from which to interrogate the parameters of the concept itself. Hence, our attention in this volume to the complex articulation of sexual difference within the sphere of the ‘anglo-global’, enables an important, and *doubly eccentric*, counter-argument to be made against the prevailing idea that globalization by needs must homogenise experience. The generic geopolitics of the transnational corporate complex cannot wholly colonise culture, annex the arts or stifle subtly inflected identities. The UK location from which women’s eccentric experiences are self-consciously constructed in and through art practices, thus offers a particular perspective on a much larger kaleidoscope of global possibilities for the futures of women’s diasporic, migratory and transnational art practices.
If location is pivotal to understanding how embodied subjects navigate the complex terrain of transnational geographies and the transcultural generation of meaning, it is equally significant in reconceiving contemporary aesthetics. Art’s role as a pivot or springboard for critical explorations of political, social and ethical ideas has a long history within western cultural tradition and discourse. The expanding field of migratory aesthetics and transnational art sees art at the forefront of debates concerning transnational identities and the social effects of globalization on the construction of identities and identifications of both the individual and the nation. Clearly, homogenous definitions of migratory aesthetics are deliberately eschewed here in favour of exposing the multiple voices and diverse methodologies more apt to the varieties of contemporary art practices and cultural debates that concern us.

In keeping with those perspectives, our use of the notion of aesthetics moves beyond the confines of the ‘philosophy of art’ to engage the challenges offered by knowledges produced through our embodied encounters with/in the world. The essays in this anthology demonstrate a clear commitment to acknowledge the significance of embodiment to feminist art practices and politics and are also noteworthy for their emphasis upon the body and a concept of experience. In this emphasis, however, they are neither naïve nor essentialist; the call to the body does not reinforce a dualism that would equate woman with body and remove the possibility of subjecthood, nor does the evocation of experience suggest an uncritical assumption of the truth or transparency of ‘biography’.
Quite the contrary. In turning toward corporeality and embodiment, we understand ‘the body’ to be a crucial social fiction, one that precedes individual subjects and constitutes them even as their continual reiteration of an ‘identity’ redefines its contours. In tandem with this, our experiences of the world are always situated and partial as well as affective. In this volume, we do not assume that knowledges are, or even can be, disembodied or formed without the residues of affective experience; rather, we move toward what has been called an ‘affective turn’, explicitly not a discourse of personal ‘feeling’, but a way of accounting for art’s ability to act politically or, arguably, have agency.

This is an understanding of art as an active constituent of meaning production, rather than a mute ‘mirror’ onto the world. Following this logic, the texts and images that comprise Women, the Arts and Globalization are focused on the ways in which art constructs locations, articulates subjects and engenders critical thought in participant-spectators, not how it ‘represents’ a pre-given ‘real’. We would argue that the work within the present volume demonstrates the active role that the arts play in the formation of complex subject-positions that move across and within conventional cultural and geopolitical boundaries to make possible a range of ‘diasporic futures’.

The realm of possibility is intrinsically linked to imagination and in that link, tends to be viewed pejoratively as impotent fiction in terms of its political or ethical efficacy. What is the point of discussing women’s art when women’s economic and social exclusion in a globalised world demands our attention and action? We would argue that there is every reason to explore the locations that enable us to
imagine the world otherwise, make possible the futures that we need to bring to bear on a world marked by social injustice and inequity, precisely because the status quo is not sufficient to the task. Engaging the powerful ‘fictions’ through which subjects are interpellated and conceptual structures such as ‘the nation’, citizenship, justice and equity are determined, is not a disengaged or politically ineffective activity. Critical thought and agency for change is effected first at the level of the subject who is moved to respond; the micro-economies of affect are a necessary corollary to the macro-economies of political change.

The Chapters
Mobility, difference and the possibilities for transformation characterise the premises of the essays collected together in this volume. There is a deliberate editorial resistance to homogeneity in the diversity of the voices collected and a number of very different approaches to the politics of representation in the individual contributions. Whilst many chapters demonstrate how the artists discussed continue to regard their work as engaging with the important political projects begun in the 1980s and 1990s to make visible and celebrate otherwise ignored aspects of women’s lives, others privilege a more open-ended and affective form of politics in their work in which participatory practices inform their mode of address and interaction with the viewer.

In the opening chapter, Angela Dimitrakaki asks how feminist art history can contribute to the making of feminism relevant to present social conditions produced as a result of globalization and how it can contribute to the transformation of these conditions. Globalization is understood here as a
particular phase in the development of capitalism, as a series of expansive imperial projects whereby capitalist relations of production and the demands of the market economy achieve planetary domination. Globalization is conceived as ‘the management of heterogeneity for profit’ and because it is defined by flows of people linked to some aspect of the economy, the author suggests that globalization upsets former paradigms of diaspora and notions of identity. For Dimitrakaki, the negative aspects of globalised experience for women are the mass experiences of economic oppression that result in new forms of female sexualised labour and readers are reminded that the mobility and transnational aspects of migration undoubtedly enjoyed by the economically enfranchised are also the cause for the re-emergence of the signifying power of the female prostitute in the new millennium - the subject of much contemporary video art. Citing the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Dimitrakaki suggests that ‘global citizenship’ should be the ‘first political demand’ of the multitude since it would transform the lives of millions of women worldwide on an even greater scale than the right to vote did within national contexts during the last century. She observes that the conditions of transnationalism currently in bed with global capitalism need to be disarticulated by the multitude in a politics of resistance with strategies learned from feminism. By highlighting the emergence of a body of work by contemporary artists for whom a focus on transnational migration and prostitution are predominant subject matter, the essay also concerns itself with the future of feminist art history as a politically relevant discipline.

Continuing an investigation of the effects of globalization on migrant female workers, Maggie O’Neill explores the ‘visual turn’ in the social sciences. She
considers the possibilities for a new sociology of art and reports on the results of how arts based research can impact on the lives of new migrants arriving in the UK and potentially change social and cultural policies and praxis. O’Neill considers specific case studies illuminating on a micro-level some of the more broadly conceived ambitions set out by Dimitrakaki in chapter one. The transformative role of art and the methodological approaches selected for working with particular artists in order to conduct ethnographic research with refugees and asylum seekers is considered in this chapter. Tellingly, O’Neill stresses three major themes to have emerged from the empirical work: ‘the importance of biography and narrative; the importance of their re-presentation in visual/artistic form and the importance of working with people as subjects’ through participatory research’. What is of particular interest here, and something that emerges from all of the contributions to the book, are the ways in which specifically personal experiences tend to inflect academic discourses of migratory experience such that they differ from many other modes of scholarly enquiry into the visual arts.

The third chapter develops this further in an edited dialogue (‘interview’) between art critic and curator Tracey Warr and artist Misha Myers, focused on Myers’ use of a participatory method of engaged art-making to develop a mode of migratory aesthetics. Using what she eloquently describes as ‘performative mapping’, Myers invites groups of new settlers in the UK (refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, ex-patriats) to wayfind through walking and talking, telling stories and navigating spaces, that bring the present locations they inhabit daily as migrants together with places they remember from the past in the countries they have left behind. These cartographic palimpsests are ‘moving’ in every sense – as Warr
aptly says in her dialogue with Myers, they are ‘fluid, expansive’ and, we would add here, affective. Continuing this theme in their discussion, Myers makes two further points that reinforce the significance of an affective dimension within a practice-led methodology. First, she stresses that her fellow wayfinders are not ‘participants’ in the conventional sense of either spectators or community members associated with ‘participatory’ arts; rather, she distinguishes them through the term ‘percipient’, stressing their embodied, sensory knowledge and experience of the work in its making. Second, Myers is clear that conversation is critical to the practice. Her work is not complete before the conversations between all percipients take place, before their active engagement with the project performs the maps.

*Women, the Arts and Globalization* is as a whole indebted to the strong sense of conversation that such claims entail and our editorial decision to include a number of dialogues/interviews within the volume was a deliberate strategy designed to encourage readers to encounter the volume as a polyphonic conversation between multiple voices and ideas: a speaking-from (here and there) and a speaking-with (ourselves and others). This is not simply a matter of semantics. In addition to encouraging multi-disciplinary methodologies to emerge with their own distinctive voices in the opening chapters, the volume’s later chapters explore the tone and timbre of the ‘close read’ and the resonance of ‘first-person’ accounts, written individually or in dialogue. We would argue that considering the intersection between migratory aesthetics and sexed subjectivity produces a shift in perspective away from ‘disembodied’ critique toward the acknowledgement of intersubjectivity, situation and the dual play of response-ability and
responsibility. These are very different locations from which to articulate art’s critical potential for women who work across political, cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries.

We underscore this insight throughout the anthology by including critical first-person accounts of practice-led interventions into the field (chapters three, four, five, nine and eleven). In chapter four, Lena Simic offers insights into the connections between institutional hierarchies and the work of women artists who, to use her tactical label, are ‘Foreigners’. She does this by setting her own work, the Magdalena Makeup Live Art Event, unsentimentally within the cultural politics of UK arts funding policy and the academic art world. Arguing that the Arts Council’s policies on ‘diversity’ have, in fact, informed the thinking that excludes and commodifies the artist/Foreigner as an interesting diversion within mainstream art institutions, Simic performs herself as Foreigner, as ‘Magdalena Makeup’, a migrant young woman from Dubrovnik, living in Liverpool, inviting audiences to see her as an eroticised commodity, crossing boundaries and causing disturbance. In a live art event, her two ‘homes’ (Dubrovnik and Liverpool) become destinations for ‘Magdalena Makeup’ postcards to be sent by audiences. In a performance resonant of Dimitrakaki’s critique from chapter one, these ephemeral tokens – viewed, handled, posted or discarded - stand in for the exchangeable Eastern European woman migrant after the fall of the Communist Block.

The fifth chapter is a dialogue between two academic feminist filmmakers concerned with the politics of diaspora. Focusing on Florence Ayisi’s award-
winning documentaries, Mo White raises important questions with Ayisi around the representation of African women in contemporary cinema. Drawing on her own status as a Cameroonian émigré into Britain, Ayisi is especially aware of the stereotyped understanding of gender roles and power relations as they are played out between the developed and the developing world. In works such as *Sisters in Law: Stories from a Cameroon Court* (2005) and *Zanzibar Soccer Queens* (2008), Ayisi’s nuanced portraits of the lives of contemporary African women refute simplistic stereotypes and suggest that gender politics in a global world may not divide easily along the lines of nation-states, ‘East’ and ‘West’, or ‘developed’ and ‘developing’. Significantly, Ayisi and White develop their dialogue around the complexity of materialising such sophisticated notions of identity through filmic form, rather than making any assumptions concerning film’s ability to ‘represent’ underlying truths. In this way, their conversation reminds us of the affective economies of filmic mediation and the importance of our embodied and located encounters with cinema to the construction of identity.

In chapter six, Marion Arnold further seeks to expand the boundaries of what scholarly considerations of the African Diaspora might be, shifting the lens away from the Anglo-American trans-Atlantic slave trade and/or the twentieth century Jamaican Commonwealth ‘Windrush’ axis towards a consideration of internal migrations within the African continent itself and more specifically the visual culture of the Southern Africa diaspora of contemporary women artists. In her alternate geography of the Anglo-global, Arnold mobilises the meaning of ‘diaspora’ as being one of ‘forced dispersal’ to one of intersection of individual and social circumstances suggesting choice (personal agency) and compulsion.
(imposed action) cannot be neatly separated in analyses of the reasons for general dispersal or relocation. She also considers what ‘the diasporic condition’ might mean, suggesting that it is both the experience and subsequent narration of processes of disruption, dispersal, relocation and adaptation to new experiences of place and domicile, shaped by individual and collective memory and current lived experiences. The diasporic condition is identified by Arnold as neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ but in between and is predicated on the search for a reconciliation of identities as inflected by past, present, ethnicity, gender, religion, language and generation. A particularly pertinent feature of this essay is its collision of academic analysis and personal experience: a scholarly essay framed by a visual narrative that is personal to the author/artist. As such it offers an interesting complement to the dialogic interviews between academics and artists within this volume.

Dialogue, transgression, de-territorialisation, contingent subjectivity and self-reflexivity emerge as key strategies of diaspora aesthetics, combined in later chapters with a specific focus on the role of history, memory and post-colonial subjectivity from an anglo-global perspective. For instance, in chapter seven, Deborah Cherry offers a poignant analysis of diasporan aesthetics as mobilised in the art of Maud Sulter, arguing for an alternative approach to the sociological focus that characterises many accounts of diasporic arts in Britain towards a focus on art as practice and its potential address to its audiences. For Cherry, like Arnold, diasporas are shown to co-exist, overlap and intersect globally and diasporic art is characterised by a wide range of practices, forms and media. Diasporan aesthetics are also understood to be ‘constantly in flux, shaped by local and global conditions and dialectic relations between art and audience’. As an
artist of Scots-Ghanian descent, Sulter’s work references a wide range of cultural, geographic and historical sources: relationships between Europe and Africa, the slave trade and its legacies, histories of nationalism and colonialism and the re-visibility and continued presence of black women in European culture.

Concerns of a similar though differently conceived nature also inflect Rosemary Betterton’s consideration of the production, reception and controversy surrounding Marc Quinn’s sculpture of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* unveiled to the public on Trafalgar Square’s Fourth Plinth in September 2005. Betterton’s chapter focuses specifically on the nature of Britishness in the contemporary era of globalization and government-led retrenchment of nationalist ideologies of ‘belonging’ that increasingly define difference as a threat. She foregrounds the symbolic status of Trafalgar Square as a site of tension between imperial narratives and the politics of dissent and argues that *Alison Lapper Pregnant* acts as a lightening rod for competing claims by different national citizens to gendered, racialised and dis/abled selfhood. In a shift of emphasis from all of the other contributions in the volume, Betterton’s essay eschews a focus on migratory aesthetics addressing instead the possibilities of futures through the analysis of a specific spatialised politics (Trafalgar Square) and its transformation via Quinn’s sculpture of a differently-abled body of a pregnant woman and its mixed critical reception.

The focus on the historical construction of sexed subjectivity and diasporic identity continues throughout the ninth chapter, in which Jane Beckett interviews Lubaina Himid. Himid was a pioneer of the UK’s Black Arts movement in the 1980s and one of a number of women artists associated with it who were unflinching in their
commitment to exploring the complex politics that reside at the nexus between ‘race’ and gender. Himid’s installations interrogate the histories and practices of art that have fostered the exclusion of black women as subjects, whilst utilising their bodies as objects. In this text, Beckett draws out the historical, aesthetic and ethical dimensions of Himid’s work through her attentive conversation with the artist. Himid acknowledges that creating aesthetic dialogues between the past and the present, the personal and the political, are critical to her practice as is her commitment to demonstrate the importance of the African diaspora to contemporary British culture. As Beckett says, Himid is ‘visualising history’ and in so doing she seeks to engage the viewer in an ethical response to history, asking us to acknowledge and thus bear the weight of the inequities of the past.

The focus on women’s bodies at the heart of historical discourses of nationalism and politics is highlighted in Michele Waugh’s consideration of Paula Rego’s *Abortion Series* (1999) in Chapter ten. As Waugh explains, Rego’s position as a Portuguese artist living and working in the UK is key to an understanding of her work as a contribution to discourses of inter-cultural exchange. Waugh also observes that part of the affect of Rego’s painting lies in part in its specific position of inter-culturalism, rather than in a depoliticised multiculturalism: Rego retains her distinct Portuguese roots within the context of her UK life and work and as such resists homogeneity in her practice. Rather, she uses her position in the UK to enable her to critique aspects of the treatment of women in her home country where abortion remains a criminal offence and contraception is not permitted under the terms of national Catholicism. Although the *Abortion Series* is inspired by political events in Portugal it raises issues of women’s right to choose on a
global stage and the work is analysed as an example or flashpoint for the collision of politics and subjectivity on a wider scale.

In the final chapter of the anthology, Dorothy Rowe is in dialogue with performance and video artist Oreet Ashery, whose work also locates the complexities of globalization at a point of collision between politics and subjectivity or, more specifically, where the body politic collides with the bodies of subjects inscribed through gender, ‘race’ and ethnicity. Using her own body, Ashery assumes alter egos through costume – probably the best-known being ‘Marcus Fisher’ (an orthodox Jewish man). As ‘Marcus’ (and others), Ashery tests the limits of our visual identification of sexual difference and ethnic identity; by taking her alter egos into public spaces and situations that define social norms of behaviour through the regulation of gender, ‘race’, religion and/or ethnicity, she risks censure (even violence) as she undoes the sharply-defined parameters of excluded difference, using eccentric performance to challenge political, social and gendered taboos. The films of the performances are in turns funny and frightening, ambivalent and apprehensive. As her work shifts the frame of diasporic identity through destabilising gender and cultural identity, Ashery suggests directions for the future that might not be premised upon sharp or fixed distinctions between selves and others. These might be a route toward global citizenship, transnational belonging or diasporic futures open to difference.

While the emphasis on ‘futures’ in the anthology is deliberate, it is not (pre-)determined. The content of many of the essays and dialogues within this volume are based around explorations of artworks and projects from the past – often, a
colonial past. However, they also point to new directions and possibilities for the future. This will be a future that neither negates the material consequences of the past nor the inequities of the present, yet is not wholly constrained by them. It is important to stress the concept of the ‘new’ in relation to the futures that are envisaged, and even materialised, by *Women, the Arts and Globalization*.

Simply, there is no teleological route to a future that can acknowledge and embrace difference; such a future is simply the ticking of the clock, the passage of time that brings with it the ever-same and not the radically different. Women artists and their artworks test the limits of the ever-same: well-rehearsed theories of globalization, trans- and multicultural identities are relocated and revised by the active interventions of women making art. Hence, the ways in which women negotiate the postcolonial terrain of diaspora, migration and transnational exchange to articulate their specific position as sexed subjects, challenges us to look again at the operations of global metropolitan networks of capital and power.

In this sense, *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience* both acknowledges and seeks to develop current work in the field by expanding the theoretical and methodological tools needed to move debates concerning diaspora, migration and identity forward, rather than fixing them in the historical past. In this way, it aspires toward the futures, as yet unknown, to which it speaks.

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1 For example Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s seminal volume on *Empire* refers generically to ‘feminist movements’ only once in its four hundred pages; see Hardt and Negri *Empire* Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2001, p.274. Also, see note 8 below concerning the extraordinary
blindness of Nicholas Bourriard’s *Altermodern* Tate Triennial exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Publishing 2009.


4 Arjun Appadurai ‘The Heart of Whiteness’ *Callaloo* vol.16, no.4 1993, p.803, pp.796-807


6 ‘Knoweldge is an activity; it is a *practice* and not a contemplative reflection. It *does things.*’


8 Nicholas Bourriard’s concept of the ‘altermodern’ somewhat belatedly acknowledges that ‘artistic styles and formats must henceforth be regarded from the viewpoint of diaspora, migration and exodus’, a political project that has informed the cultural criticism of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer, Rashaed Araeen and a host of other cultural commentators in Britain since at least the 1980s, if not earlier. The institutionalisation of diaspora within the economics of the contemporary art scene jostles uneasily against the more nuanced political agendas active in the writings of Hall, Gilroy, Mercer and others who are disturbingly omitted from Bourriard’s account. See Bourriard, Nicholas (ed.) *Altermodern* Tate Triennial, Tate Publishing, London 2009, n.p.


We use the phrase ‘diasporic futures’ deliberately here to invoke the conference *Diasporic Futures: Women the Arts and Globalization* held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in July 2006. Convened and organised by Meskimmon, Rowe and Professor Fran Lloyd (Kingston University, London), it was this conference that began the work toward this volume. While its present shape has transformed radically during the intervening years, enriched by ideas emerging from the field as well as a range of additional contributors, its origin in the dialogues begun during that event is important.