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Writing across gaps: negotiating places of uncertainty

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Writing across gaps: negotiating places of uncertainty

Abstract

Humans are the only animals that attempt to make sense of their lived experiences through story. In *Six Walks In The Fictional Woods*, Umberto Eco says: 'to read fiction means to play a game by which we give sense to the immensity of things that happened, are happening, or will happen in the actual world' (1998: 87). In recent years there has been a spate of novels that attempt this negotiation through multi-narrations that surf time, genre hop and shift geographical location. In the March 8th Book Review section of the *New York Times* (2012: 11), critic Douglas Coupland coined the term 'translit' to describe such novels. If we accept Coupland's term, Hari Kunzru's *Gods Without Men* (2012), David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), and Steve Amsterdam's *Things We Didn't See Coming* (2009) might all be called translit, and so too Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). Yet by choosing to travel across narrative boundaries in this way, what might a translit author offer the reader? Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in 'The Story of "I": Illness and Narrative Identity', says, 'we lead our lives as stories, and our identity is constructed both by stories we tell ourselves and others about ourselves and by the master narratives that consciously or unconsciously serve as models for ours' (2002: 11). Through an encounter with my own creative process when writing my novel, *Storyland*, this paper argues that by situating an uncertain present with the imagined future and (or) the historical past, translit novels may offer a different way of paying attention to the world and hence to the construction of our identity.

Keywords

gaps, across, writing, places, uncertainty, negotiating

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Writing Across Gaps: Negotiating Places of Uncertainty

Session E4

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Biographical Note: Dr Catherine McKinnon is a lecturer in Performance at the University of Wollongong. In 2008 Penguin Viking published her novel, *The Nearly Happy Family*. Her plays *Immaculate Deceptions* (1988), *A Rose By Any Other Name* (1989; 1992), *Road To Mindanao* (1991) and *Eye of Another* (1996) were produced by the Red Shed Theatre Company and Adelaide Festival. Her play *Tilt* was selected for the 2010 National Playwriting Australia Festival and 2011 High-Tide Genesis Research Development Laboratory, London. *As I Lay Dreaming* won the 2010 Mitch Matthews Award and was highly commended in the 2013 Griffin Award. Her short stories, journal articles and reviews have appeared in *Transnational Literature*, *Text*, *RealTime*, and forthcoming in *Narrative*.

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