

The seduction of Sarah: travel memoirs and intercultural learning

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The Seduction of Sarah: Travel Memoirs and Intercultural Learning

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the nexus between intercultural storytelling and intercultural learning. Noting the wide appeal of the travel memoir set in France, it takes as a case study a book that, while positioned within that genre, attempts to shift some predictable patterns: Sarah Turnbull's best-selling *Almost French*. Analysis shows that the book in fact participates in a subtle play of genres, whereby the lure of the travel memoir is used to entice readers towards a position where they read the book as a guide to French culture. The particular form of hybridity attempted is, however, a delicate enterprise, as the reception of the book demonstrates, in that the intercultural lessons on offer risk being overshadowed by the expectations readers bring to the genre of the travel memoir. The paper examines the competing seductions operating throughout the text and relates the conditions for taking up the opportunity for intercultural learning to questions of genre. It offers a pedagogical uptake of the textual analysis, thus bridging disciplines in a way that mirrors Turnbull's bridging of genres.

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the lure of the travel memoir is used to entice readers towards a position where they read the book as a guide to French culture. The particular form of hybridity attempted is, however, a delicate enterprise, as the reception of the book demonstrates, in that the intercultural lessons on offer risk being overshadowed by the expectations readers bring to the genre of the travel memoir. And yet...travel has changed a great deal in our lifetimes. Depending on your age, it has gone from travel for the elite to travel for the masses; from lugging thick, dog-eared guidebooks to quickly downloading apps; from asking friends for advice to asking the world. With the whole world open to us, and travel easier than ever, how can modern travelers find what they desire? And how has learning about the world changed, with the advent of the internet and 24/7 global knowledge? Critical thinking skills are a must, to discern reality from braggadocio, to find intercultural tips instead of diaries. Learning from experts is important, as well – it's one thing to read of someone's experiences, another to read the experiences of someone who has thoughtfully embraced lifelong learning and travel. The seduction of Sarah: travel memoirs and intercultural learning. BE Hanna, J De Nooy. PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies 3 (2), 2006. Breach of contact: An intercultural reading of China Mieville's 'The city and the city'. P Cowley, B Hanna. PORTAL: Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies 11 (2), 131, 2014.