

***Transnational Geographies of the Heart***, by Katie Walsh, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018  
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*Transnational Geographies of the Heart* provides rich insights into the lives of British migrants in Dubai during a time when the UAE was undergoing rapid globalisation, super-fast urbanisation, and economic diversification (2002 – 2004). Dubai, as Walsh explains, was a perfect site to explore transnational migrants' intimate subjectivities. It is one of the 'most global' cities in the world with about 85% of its population born in other countries, and appealing to British migrants due to 'tax-free sunshine' (p. 2).

Walsh was motivated to conduct research on British migrants in Dubai not because she had been one, but because she wanted to know their sense of home and belonging, their geographies of the heart. She found herself 'increasingly exploring the textures of intimacy negotiated and enacted by British migrants in this particular spatial-temporal, and thoroughly transnational, urban site, but without the language for doing so' (p. 4).

The book then, focuses on 'freely established relationships from the perspective of relatively privileged migrants, questions of power and the impact of global work on the reproduction of migrants' subjectivities' (p. 4). British migrants in Dubai are marked by privilege – white, middle class, heterosexual – yet they are also diverse in their performances of heterosexual and gendered subjectivities. This book shows the power of these performances as they work, play and live in Dubai. Throughout the book Walsh refuses to focus on any one type of relationship, rather she explores on a range of interpersonal relations, such as friendships, 'community', and sexual relationships. As

she notes 'love ties cannot be isolated from their enactment of friendship or family' (p. 4) and this intersectional approach to intimate subjectivities proves to be a rich formula for her research.

The book is valuable theoretically in that it troubles ideas and concepts related to transnationalism. Rallying against the abstract descriptions of disembodied global flows, Walsh brings together feminist, queer, postcolonial, emotion and affect theories to extend existing research on migrants' subjectivities. Further, her use of 'intimacy' shows the complex geographies of personal relationships and sexual practices in relation to friends, lovers, and families within Dubai British migrant communities.

Walsh spent approximately 17 months in Dubai, immersing herself in the everyday lives and spaces of British 'expats' and using in-depth interviewing, ethnographic 'shadowing' with interviewees, and accepted invites into special events in domestic and social spaces (with one exception, not 'working spaces'). I appreciate the careful detail of the research process, particularly the reflexive notes (pp. 61–64). As geographers study other people's intimate lives and spaces, over an extended period, it is not surprising that friendships develop. Walsh notes that she formed strong friendships and felt, at times, that she belonged in certain spaces and places. Walsh's own sense of home changed over the course of the research leaving her – much like her participants - feeling torn between places (the UK and Dubai) and friendships.

The second half of the book details specific empirical contexts. Chapter four shows the mutual construction of city and migrants. It gives detail about the relational processes of the marginalising Emirati nationals and low-income Asian migrants, as the

British 'expatriate' subjectivities become local, global and privileged. The home is one site where the relatively privileged, white British migrant workers have frequent encounters with non-white and marginalised low income migrant workers. Yet even in private intimate home spaces, where different migrant bodies are physically close to one another, empathetic relationships rarely form.

Chapter five builds on the previous chapter and shows British migrants' desire for community and new people who are similar to them. This chapter gives great insight into the way in which clubs are racialised and classed. Old hobbies and new activities – for example, golf, sailing and hotel beach clubs – are privatised spaces of leisure where British nationals 'reproduce their 'expatriate' subjectivities as racialized and classed subjectivities' (p. 90). The significance of friendships (often missing in geographical knowledge) is highlighted in this chapter.

Sex, desire and romance for 'single' straight British migrants in the global city is the topic of chapter six. Walsh found that young British migrants tend to imagine Dubai as holiday space, and this 'shapes cultures of intimacy in respect to the way in which single migrants approach their sexual / romantic encounters and relationships' (p. 117). Everyday life is 'like living in Disneyland, a holiday analogy evocative of excitement, leisure, escape, freedom and play' (p. 118). In these liminal spaces sexual desire is prioritised over romantic commitments and new intimate subjectivities are 'tried out' in Dubai.

Chapter seven moves to examining family lives, familial and spousal relationships and the ways in which they are shaped in Dubai. There is a great deal of emotional and

practical work that goes into making heteronormative Dubai homes. The reassertion of gendered labour roles means that for some British women in Dubai being the main carer was a welcome opportunity to focus on husbands and children, yet for other women their intimate marital relationship suffered when they became 'just a housewife'. Staying connected to family 'back home' also took on new significance in Dubai. Adult children and grandchildren were missed and spatial proximity was desired by many of Walsh's interviewees, even if it was just to share 'a cup of tea and check on them' (p. 141).

The final chapter prompts the reader to rethink global cities (Dubai and others) through the deeply felt dimensions of intimacy, belonging and home. At the end I am left with no doubt about the significance of intimacy in shaping transnational geographies of the heart and migrant subjectivities. *Transnational Geographies of the Heart* is a book that will be immensely useful to a diverse range of scholars, not just geographers, but also sociologists, anthropologists, and, migration, feminist, queer, and urban scholars. I am always in awe of scholars that can write for multiple audiences and Walsh has managed to do this. Her lively and engaging book brings to light the complexity of intimate lives, subjectivities, encounters, home, belonging and power for British migrant workers in Dubai.

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