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War has not changed our spirit, nor our life

Jesuit Refugee Service, ISBN 88-88126-01-5

Daughters of dispersal

Joanne Barseghian-Budden (Ed.), ISBN 0-538300-0

Migrant belongings: memory, space, identity

Anne-Marie Fortier, Oxford, 2000, Berg Hbk, ISBN 1-85973-405-7, Pbk, ISBN 1-85973-410-3

These three diverse books focus on matters of belonging, loss, dislocation, and what it means to begin anew in extremely trying and stretching circumstances. The accounts contained within the books are not sentimental or easy but rather illustrate peoples' capacities to make good and precious things out of their lives by creating and forging links, through an engagement with the past, present and future, and by way of everyday activities. Two of these books – *Daughters of Dispersal*, and *War has not changed our life* are personal accounts of dislocation and exile. They speak of painful suffering and extreme loss and the reader is called upon to witness a range of human capacities – from cruelty, rage, inflicting humiliation and torture to forgiveness, kindness, generosity, faith in self and others and the ability to endure indignity. *Migrant Belongings* is an account of the Italian community in London and is firmly located within the academy. Anne-Marie Fortier traces through with theoretical and emotional understanding the issues of uncertainty and what it takes to make the transition/s from that which is known and can be taken for granted to that which is insecure and evokes vulnerability. A particular strength of Fortier's book is her emphasis on the ambivalent wish to belong and not belong felt by so many migrants and refugees. There is no easy resort to hybridity, or post-modern notions of identity that we can all belong easily and everywhere but rather the effort and confusion/s are carefully explored. All three books share a concern with memory and the importance of remembrance and forgetting. Further, all reveal the importance of giving voice to experiences and feelings. Importantly, these books are not solipsistic nor do they encourage interiority, rather the accounts and analysis promote human resilience through community/ies, social life, public participation and traditions. The personal accounts especially are a poignant testimony to the way other people, feelings, scars, and desires do not fade in time, indeed they remain and yet these refugees function through these past experiences and wounds. It has

become too easy to draw upon discontinuity and fluidity as celebratory aspects of subjectivity but what these books illustrate so powerfully, in their different ways and through diverse communities, is the importance of continuity, of holding the past and present in mind and that making a life anew is possible, though easier said than done.

Amal Treacher

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Supporting refugee children in 21st century Britain: a compendium of essential information

Jill Rutter, 2001, Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent, UK, £16.99 pbk, ISBN 185856185X, 300pp

1 The title of Nick Hardwick's Plenary paper at the Politics of Childhood Conference, University of Hull, UK, 22–24th July 2002.

Nick Hardwick, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, argues that refugee children should be seen as children first and foremost, rather than simply as refugees.¹ Instead, their particular needs as children often go unrecognized. The UK asylum system makes no concessions for children, in terms of the 10-day deadline on filing an application for asylum or in the procedure for being interviewed by immigration officers, and these practices hit hard the 3,500–4,000 refugee children who come to the UK unaccompanied each year. Family and human rights legislation (protecting the right to a private and family life) might serve refugee children better than UK immigration law (see for example, Coker *et al.*, 2002), and social services might better recognize the needs of refugee children than the education system. At the initial stages, whether accompanied or not, access to education may seem a low priority. However, the education system can be a gateway to other services, and schools themselves can play a crucial role in supporting children, enabling them to begin to rebuild their lives and providing a chance for 'the genuine inclusion of all children and their families into the local community and mainstream society' (Dennis, 2002). However, nearly half the refugee children in one recent study were not accessing any form of education: it is one of the ways (health among them) in which refugee children in England are missing out (Dennis, 2002). The authors argue that the 'structure and routine of a normal school day can help provide a sense of normality and security in a child's life and is therefore a vital component in promoting their emotional, physical, educational and social development and well-being' (p. 6). This is one of the reasons for heated opposition to the Government's proposal for the segregated education of asylum seeker children in 'reception' (detention) centres, rather than mainstream schools. Critics also highlighted the value of inclusive education for the whole class and for