

Book 2.0

Volume 12 Number 1

© 2022 Intellect Ltd Editorial. English language. [https://doi.org/10.1386/btwo\\_00055\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1386/btwo_00055_2)

## EDITORIAL

**MICK GOWAR**

Independent scholar

**MARK TURIN**

University of British Columbia

The main focus of this issue of *Book 2.0* is migration, movement and exile. This is partly in response to what has been widely described as a ‘migrant crisis’ which has been a continuing concern of European and American journalists, social media commentators and the more politically engaged ‘Twitterati’ since at least 2015. Another factor behind our choice of this issue’s theme has been the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rapid spread of SARS-CoV-2 and its variants. There is a growing awareness that movement and migration are the determining factors in the lives of so many living things: not only pathogens but the sea voyages of *coco de mer* and the blue whale; the airborne migrations of bats and swallows; and the long migrations (in both distance and time) undertaken by our own species, from our point of origin in Africa to every continent on Earth.

Many people choose a form of voluntary exile within their own countries in order to experience very different lives to those they have been brought up to. Poet and academic Nigel Wheale was born in the English Midlands, studied and taught in Cambridge in the east of England, but left to live in the far north of Scotland, on the largest of the Isles of Orkney – confusingly known as Mainland – to serve as a carer for his mother and then to work as a carer to other Orcadians. In two extracts from his memoirs, he recalls in prose written with the precision and eye of a poet, some of his earliest childhood memories, and some of the places and people he visited as a carer in the Orkney Islands.

Linguistic anthropologist Mark Turin’s career has included extensive field work in the Himalaya and teaching and research positions at universities in three continents. He is also an accomplished poet, as readers will see from these delicate and lyrical snapshots of lives glimpsed while travelling and working in Nepal.

### KEYWORDS

migration  
poetry  
Indigenous  
Hebrew  
Ukraine  
Heaney  
separation  
experimental

As well as being shared, retold and celebrated, stories and their tellers – not to mention the ideas and experiences of whole communities and cultural groups – can also be neglected: out of malice, fear or simple ignorance. Some of the most shameful acts of enforced forgetting have been the wholesale erasure of Indigenous languages and cultures by regional and central governments in many nations. In Britain, individual teachers as well as a number of semi-official organizations attempted over two centuries to eradicate the Welsh language through a system of punishments that became known as ‘Welsh Not’ – the words on the sign that was hung round the necks of children caught speaking Welsh in school. Other nations have made even more brutal attempts to eradicate languages and cultures which were deemed by those in authority to be backwards, primitive, regressive or potentially subversive. In a revealing and thought-provoking conversation, co-editor of this issue Mark Turin talks to Indigenous film producer and language worker Calvin Hartwig about the pressures on Indigenous people to conform to the expectations and norms of settler societies. In the interview, they discuss Hartwig’s recent film, ‘This Is Who I Am’ (2016), which looks at the life of a young Indigenous woman living in New York City and her struggles and decisions as she rediscovers and asserts her identity and heritage.

Ideas can also be unjustly denigrated, dismissed, ignored and eventually forgotten if they originate with individuals or groups who do not conform to accepted notions of authority or standards of social acceptability. When eminent educationist Lissa Paul started looking for a key text to form the basis of a course on the highly contested area of the philosophy of education, she was disappointed to find that despite being published in comparatively recent times, what appeared to be the best option (Cahn 2011) reflected only a narrow range of ideas and experiences. Rather than rejecting the book, she used it as a starting point to encourage a very talented group of postgraduate students to propose a number of additions to more fully represent the diversity of historical and modern educational ideas which they felt had been overlooked or ignored. In the contribution, which Paul introduces and concludes, each student explains their choice.

This multi-vocal article is followed by the single voice of poet and graduate researcher Anudeep Dewan, an emerging Indigenous scholar from Nepal. ‘Inheritance’, the first of two poems, is a meditation on the devastating effects on a family of generations of migrant workers who are considered ‘disposable’; and yet the speaker of the poem is able to defiantly and bravely declare:

Save our breath  
to awaken our tongues, in slumber  
utter apologies we were never taught to say,  
utter apologies we never heard.  
Allow us to cry, curse in anger  
and let these not be the last words  
that roll out of our tongues.

In her second poem, a poignant and sombre short lyric, Dewan tells of the experience of someone who has lost their language, whose tongue has been colonized and has become ‘a perpetual failing to remember’.

At the start of this editorial, we referred to the ‘migration crisis’ which has contributed to the rise of so-called ‘populist’ politicians in Europe and the United States. Some commentators have rather suggested that the ‘migration

crisis' be viewed as exactly the opposite: a 'crisis of welcome' (Farrah and Muggah 2018: n.pag.). Just as writers are willing to undergo their own form of exile in order to learn from and support people from other, often marginalized cultures, so too there are those who remain eager to welcome and support incoming migrants seeking refuge from war, persecution and poverty. Two such souls are the Irish writers Deborah Thomas and Tatyana Feeney. In their lively and enlightening article 'Bridges of hope' they describe some of the many projects of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in Ireland to which they have contributed. These include *Once Upon a Folktale*, in which children from different backgrounds and cultures share traditional tales from their countries of origin and *Silent Books*, a collection of wordless books which can be enjoyed by children no matter their linguistic heritage.

Nitzan Chelouche writes about a fascinating research project on written language in which she has been engaged in Berlin, where the growing number of Israeli immigrants has resulted in Hebrew letterforms – formerly seen only in synagogues, in cemeteries and on memorials – appearing increasingly in public places such as restaurants, cafés and in logos. Through interviews with café owners, Chelouche demonstrates how settlers of Israeli origin express their cultural identity through typeface and design in their new city of residence, Berlin.

In each issue of *Book 2.0*, we aim to include the work of a leading illustrator or book artist. Regular readers may remember *Blackrock Sequence*, Jim Butler's collaboration with his poet brother which was featured in the last issue. In this issue, we have another moving and thoughtful example of the power of the mark and the image in the form of a visual essay by Leslie Gates about her artist's book *Families Separated and Detained at the Border* (2019). The book is specifically concerned with families detained attempting to cross from Mexico into the United States, but the anger and sorrow that it contains could equally be about any migrants held in degrading and inhumane conditions.

We draft this editorial on the twelfth day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainian civilians are being targeted and killed by Russian mortar fire as they attempt to follow evacuation routes from small towns close to Kyiv. Emma Dallamora's creative response to her family's experience of migration has gained even greater relevance in recent days, as it opens with her Ukrainian great-grandparents and grandmother living through famine, war and displaced persons camps until her grandmother finally reached Australia as a refugee in 1949. In a blend of various prose forms and free verse, Dallamora evokes her grandmother's struggles and the complex challenges faced by subsequent generations in Australia, because, as she explains so starkly: 'One thing they don't tell you about being migrants is that it doesn't require any movement at all'.

The selection of articles concludes with three fine poems by poet and scholar Michael Joseph. The longest is an intriguing and audacious sequel to Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, in which Scrooge's post-epiphany life is imagined with a greater realism than Dickens's 'and they all lived happily ever after' conclusion to the tale. This allowed the author to turn his attention to other characters and stories and to turn away from the ever-dominant Scrooge. Meanwhile, as Scrooge relates, his transformation from miser to philanthropist is greeted not with delight by his fellow Londoners, but with suspicion:

The good people of this town now greet me  
With the side-eye. They had no use for my thrift  
But despise my liberality.

And there is a chilling implication of anti-semitism:

the few  
When they think I'm not listening, whisper  
*Not of the faith.*

(original emphasis)

Does this explain why Scrooge in both Dickens's novel and Joseph's poem is unquestionably an outsider – that he was from a migrant background? And do these whispers excuse Scrooge's final renunciation of philanthropy and benevolence?

This issue of *Book 2.0* concludes with an insightful review by Jim Butler of the recent short but remarkably thorough and readable biography of the Irish poet Seamus Heaney by the distinguished historian of Ireland, R. F. Foster. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce's protagonist Stephen Dedalus declares: 'I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning' (Joyce 1967: 247). Heaney joked that his year as a visiting professor at the Stanford University in California was one of 'silence, exile and sunning' (Foster 2020: 27). But the joke should not distract from the reality of Heaney's life as an outsider and in many ways an exile: first as a member of the Catholic minority growing up in the 1940s and 1950s in sectarian Northern Ireland; then in 1972 as one of a number of not always warmly welcomed exiled Northerners in the Republic of Ireland; as a distinguished professor at Harvard; and finally as a Nobel laureate propelled into international celebrity by what he described as a 'mostly benign avalanche' (Foster 2020: 148).

## REFERENCES

- Cahn, Steven M. (2011), *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Farrah, Raouf and Muggah, Robert (2018), 'Europe faces a "welcoming crisis" when it comes to migrants and refugees: It's not fair', openDemocracy, 20 December, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/europe-faces-welcoming-crisis-when-it-comes-to-migrant/>. Accessed 5 March 2022.
- Foster, R. F. (2020), *On Seamus Heaney*, Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Gates, Leslie (2019), *Families Separated and Detained at the Border*, <https://leslie-gates.wordpress.com/portfolio/artist-books/#jp-carousel-479>. Accessed 19 April 2022.
- Joyce, James (1967), *The Essential James Joyce* (ed. H. Levin), Harmondsworth: Penguin.

## CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Mick Gowar is editor of *Book 2.0* and secretary of the Ted Hughes Society, and until his retirement was a senior lecturer and teaching fellow at the Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. He is widely known as an

author of children's books and a teacher of creative writing. Since 1980 he has written or edited over 100 books for children and young people, including books of poetry, novels, short stories and non-fiction books for educational series. He has visited schools, libraries, colleges and festivals throughout the United Kingdom and abroad to give readings, performances and lead workshops and has undertaken educational projects for, among others, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Britten Sinfonia, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and the Fitzwilliam Museum and Kettles Yard Gallery in Cambridge. He has tutored at the Arvon Foundation and Talliesin Trust and was a member of the judging panel for the W H Smith Young Writers' Competition.

E-mail: [mick@mickgowar.net](mailto:mick@mickgowar.net)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5038-8048>

Mark Turin is an anthropologist, linguist and occasional radio presenter, and an associate professor at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Western Canada. He is cross-appointed between the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies and the Department of Anthropology. Before joining UBC, Turin taught at Yale and Cambridge Universities. For over twenty years, Turin's regional focus has been the Himalayan region (particularly Nepal, northern India and Bhutan), and, more recently, the Pacific Northwest. He is the author or co-author of four books and three travel guides, and the editor of twelve volumes. He also edits a series on oral literature.

Contact: University of British Columbia, 156 Buchanan E, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1, Canada.

E-mail: [mark.turin@ubc.ca](mailto:mark.turin@ubc.ca)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2262-0986>

Mick Gowar and Mark Turin have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the authors of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

---