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Jerrold Seigel, *Between Cultures: Europe and its Others in Five Exemplary Lives*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 275 pp. Bibliography and index. \$49.95 U.S. (hb). 978-0-8122-4761-9.

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In this age of mass migrations, the expectations of migrants as they encounter the cultural and social norms of the host country can lead to frustration or, at worst, violence. Even in the more tranquil circumstances of individual migration, the transitional experience is not always serene. Unlike the dislocation of diasporic movements, the intercultural identity, as Jerrold Seigel dubs it, that allows individuals to negotiate more than one culture with equanimity and varying degrees of success, is primarily the reserve of the determined, the intuitive, or the well-educated. *Between Cultures* deals with five such individuals, who have negotiated two cultures either to fulfill personal aspirations or because their intellectual development was shaped by more than one culture.

The five main sections of the book each focus primarily on one personality. Three of these, Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890), T.E. Lawrence (1888-1935), and Louis Massignon (1883-1962), were Europeans who embraced Islamic culture. The remaining two, Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) and Orhan Pamuk (b.1952), developed intellectually in a dual- or multi-cultural setting. In the section on Achebe, Seigel includes cameos of two additional authors, Sheikh Hamidou Kane (b. 1923) and Tayeb Salih (1929-2009), both of whom were from an Islamic background. Seigel presents the portraits of his subjects in the chronological order of their intellectual activity, thus creating a framework for his discussion that runs from the imperial to the post-colonial. Threaded through this chronology is the mutation from imperial introspection to post-colonial multiplicity as demonstrated by the five men's personal and literary trajectories. By means of an acute analysis of their works, Seigel demonstrates the significance of intercultural identity to artistic and personal development, without overlooking its ambiguities.

The three foremost reasons that determined Seigel's choice of subjects were their popular and scholarly attraction, the overall diversity of time and place, which he argues provides a sufficient variety of examples and, finally, the extensive documentation available for each. In addition to their published works, he has examined memoirs, letters, interviews, anthropological writing, and archival documentation. As he was exploring possibilities for his analysis, it seemed to Seigel that, "they offered themselves as subjects" (p. 11). Seigel lists eight women whom he could have considered but explains their absence by the lack of "a rich texture of [the sort of] materials" that existed for the male selections; a curious statement given that examples of his exclusions include Isabelle Eberhardt, Gertrude Bell, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (p. 11). Material on Eberhardt is certainly not lacking. Neither is it for Bell, who was instrumental in British imperial policy-making in the Middle East and helped to establish the Hashemite dynasties. She would have made a fascinating counterpoint to Seigel's discussion of Lawrence, in much the same way as Kane and Salih are introduced in the discussion of Achebe. As for Jhabvala, although she died in 2013, her unusual background and intellectual achievements—to say nothing of her work with Merchant Ivory productions—have produced the "rich material" that Seigel was seeking. Her inclusion would also have stretched the "diversity of place" to the

sub-continent. All three women have letters or memoirs (or both) and an abundance of their own writings in print. An analysis of one of these women's writing would have added a welcome complication to the concept of intercultural identity by introducing the intricacies of the "culture" of gender, which women had (and have) to negotiate. It is a regrettable omission.

Notwithstanding this absence, with the exception of Achebe, Seigel's choices all touch on an intercultural identity related to Islam, either as a consuming interest in a counterculture or as the cultural and religious fabric of their own society. The attraction of Islam for men who came of age during the high imperial period, particularly among the British and the French, is attested by both individuals and military units who adopted Islamic dress (and lifestyle). Officers of the French spahis and, as late as the mid-twentieth century, the British Trucial Oman Scouts readily spring to mind. The choice of Burton and Lawrence as his first two subjects, therefore, makes sense. Not only were both men motivated by a genuine admiration for and attraction to Islam and its Eastern lifestyle, but their sequential inclusion also highlights the changing nature of British imperialism.

Burton was a polyglot, whose chameleon-like ability to adopt the language, behavior, and customs of his Muslim friends and interlocutors enabled him to make pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina undetected. His extensive travels throughout India, Arabia, and Africa are broached through the analysis of his extensive archive, although the emphasis in the section is on his relation to Islam rather than on the travels themselves. Starting with his early life and background Seigel examines the way Burton assumed his Eastern alter ego. He traces Burton's developing interest in Islamic religion from his experiences in Sind, while serving in the army in India, to his maturation into a skilled linguist and translator. He argues that it had a destabilizing impact on his identity as the line between imitation and identification became increasingly difficult to define, earning him the sobriquet of "white nigger" by his less sympathetic contemporaries. Seigel points to the ambiguity of assumed identities that, in the case of Burton, blurred his European distinctiveness while simultaneously bringing his identification with it into sharper focus (p. 26)—a phenomenon that is encountered in most expatriate communities, even today. Burton himself acknowledged this during his pilgrimages to the holy places of Islam.

When analyzing Burton's writings, Seigel does not fall into the presentist trap of labeling him a racist. He rightly reminds us that language that appears to be so, even bordering on what present-day readers might consider bigoted, was the linguistic currency of the period and needs to be considered as such. Race was a looser notion that had not acquired the hard and fast framework, associated with slavery or colonization, that emerged in the twentieth century. Seigel situates the emergence of Burton's anti-Jewish (he does not use anti-Semitic) pronouncements at the end of the nineteenth century as a response to the ethnic conflicts he encountered in Damascus when he was Consul there. The careful analysis of works such as *Stone Talk* or the translation of a *Thousand and One Nights* are nuanced and rich in personal and literary detail. His evaluation of the John Payne/Burton controversy over the *Nights* is tempered, although he avers that Burton probably would not have been able to publish his version had Payne's not been available. Nonetheless, he points out that the debate as to whether or not Burton cribbed from Payne is less important than the role Burton's translation of the *Nights* played in his "larger involvement in Arab and Muslim culture" (p. 58). Burton was a creature of nineteenth-century imperialism, even if he was not an imperialist in the accepted sense of the term.

The intercultural identity of Lawrence, the second of Seigel's subjects, was shaped by his strategic experiences in World War I. The moniker "Lawrence of Arabia," which he acquired as a result of his success in inducing the Arab tribes to rise up against Ottoman domination and his ability to meld sartorially and mentally with his Arab associates, was an indication that his achievements, on both counts, were "rare and memorable" (p. 65). Unlike Burton, whose Arab persona was essentially a disguise, Lawrence assumed his Arab identity openly and comprehensively enough to create a duality that haunted him throughout his life. This ambiguity was caused by the fact that although he could not break the bond of his Arab affiliation, he came to rue it at the end of his life. His Arab adventure and

identity, Seigel tells us, “stand in the shadow—or the glare—of this rejection” (p. 65). Unlike Burton’s essentially personal quest, Lawrence’s activities were framed by his role in the military. The guilt that Lawrence felt at the war’s end when the British and French betrayed the Arabs by denying their leaders what they believed they had been promised for their assistance, namely the autonomy of Syria and Palestine, no doubt contributed to his fractured sentiments. While Seigel provides a rich analysis of Lawrence’s published and unpublished work, which illustrates his personal, intellectual and official trajectory, an underlying theme, which he does not explicitly address, is the impact of the historical moment. From Burton to Lawrence the transition is from the confidence of nineteenth-century imperialism to the shattering blow it received as a result of the war. With hindsight, Lawrence’s post-war discomfort and guilt can almost be seen as a prescient reaction. His close identification with the Arabs made him acutely aware of the potential results of the betrayal, in which he had inadvertently taken part. The slighting of the Arab tribes could (and of course eventually did) trigger an unintended response leading to turmoil in the Middle East. Seigel does a fine job of laying out the reasons behind Lawrence’s conflicted personality. The imitation that, Seigel tells us, is an essential part of creating an intercultural identity engulfed Lawrence to an extent it did not for the other subjects of this book. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the portrait of Lawrence is one of the longest sections of the book.

Like Burton and Lawrence, Louis Massignon was a product of the imperial moment, but it is the spiritual element of Louis Massignon’s fascination with Islam that prompted Seigel to include him in his choice of subjects. As a renowned scholar and professor at the Collège de France, Massignon’s attempt to unravel the ties between Catholicism and Islam lent a strongly philosophical dimension to the acquisition of his “Janus-faced” intercultural identity. Seigel sets out to show that Massignon’s efforts to map out and inhabit a space between the two religions deserve more attention than hitherto received. Massignon’s personal trajectory led to the formulation of a series of reflections about Islam in relation to Christianity and the West, producing a provocative historical theory that drew its basic pattern from Nietzsche. Although a devoted Catholic, Massignon was a “visionary” whose unorthodox connections to the thought of Nietzsche provided a radical edge to his own ideas (p. 115). In tracing the impact of Massignon’s early life, Seigel points to the sense of personal degradation he acquired and, much like Lawrence, his close association with Islam was a way of reconstructing a stronger identity. Massignon knew Lawrence, and Seigel spends several pages analyzing their association, which began when Massignon was appointed as Lawrence’s French counterpart. As an official representative to Emir (later King) Feisal and distributor of French funds, a position that Lawrence did not much appreciate, Massignon was able to deepen his knowledge of both regional politics and Islamic thought. In the latter regard, Massignon became fascinated with the Persian Sufi mystic, Husayn Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, whom he saw as offering possibilities for making connections between Christianity and Islam. Massignon’s interpretation of Hallaj’s significance became the “nucleus for the more general theory of history” he developed in his work (p. 145). Although Massignon remained a devout Catholic, Seigel demonstrates how the allure of Islam, with the concomitant need to square it with Christianity, unsettled Massignon and helped create his intercultural identity. Like Burton’s and Lawrence’s, it was an identity shaped by the imperial moment. As a result, however much these three men tried to equate the two cultures, the power inequalities of imperialism were a substructure difficult to elude.

Straddling the imperial and post-colonial period, Chinua Achebe’s intercultural identity provides a different lens through which to view the various tensions that contribute to its development. Unlike the preceding subjects, Achebe’s identity was not shaped by a fixation with, or a connection to, Islam. His parents were missionaries, being among the first people in the Ibo region to accept Christianity. On the other hand, one of his great-uncles, to whom he was close, refused conversion, preferring to stick to his traditional animist beliefs. By his own admission, Achebe’s artistic career was shaped by the tension between the Christianity of his parents and the animism of his great-uncle. Achebe profited from the British educational system and was in the first class of the University College of Ibadan, established in 1948. As Seigel points out, Achebe’s writings are threaded through with his persistent identification with British culture (p. 155). His intercultural identity was complicated by the fact that he was an Ibo,

the ethnic group seeking secession from Nigeria during the Biafran war (1967-1970). The dual struggle for independence, first from the colonial, and then from the Nigerian, state was a determining factor in his writing. Seigel's analysis encompasses the sequence of his books from *Things Fall Apart* to Achebe's later work, tying them in to his personal, political, and intellectual development.

As a contrast to Achebe, Seigel includes the writers Sheikh Hamidou Kane and Tayeb Salih, from Senegal and the Sudan, respectively. He thus brings Islam back into the picture. Kane was shaped by French colonial rule but his intellectual development was much like that of Achebe. His work bears the imprint of a French education and Seigel tells us that whereas Achebe's work is descriptive and ethnographic, Kane's is poetic and metaphysical, presenting "the cultural clash between Europe and Africa less in terms of contrasting lifeways than as a collision of worldviews" (p. 181). A pertinent observation given the cultural confrontations that French colonial administrations had with Islam. Salih, on the other hand, is more categorically anti-colonial than either of the other two, although, like Achebe, he points to the post-independence corruption and selfish ambitions of the African leadership, which dishonor his country.

In the last portrait, Seigel moves back to the Eastern Mediterranean to consider the work of the Nobel laureate, Orhan Pamuk. His image of the West is "not a sunny, enlightened, grandiose idea...[but] a tension, a violence, born of love and hate, longing and humiliation" (p. 197). Pamuk may be the most recent of Seigel's subjects, but he too has lived in the shadow of empire. The demise of the Ottomans, with the help of the Western powers, creates the tension he feels and projects into his work. Unlike Seigel's other subjects, all of whose trajectories were, to some degree, a slippage from one identity to another, Pamuk has embraced both by means of his love of Western art and literature and a strong identification with his beloved Istanbul, the former capital of the Ottomans and once the most cosmopolitan city of the Levant. Seigel's analysis of Pamuk's work highlights the nostalgia that progressively emerges. By the time his memoir, *Istanbul*, is published in 2003, Pamuk is calling attention to the concept of *hüzün*, "a deep sadness...[or] melancholy that is communal rather than private" (p. 199). An urban melancholy for the Istanbul of the 1950s and early 1960s, which was a very different place from that of the twenty-first century. The transition from city to megapolis, from traveler's haven to tourist Mecca, from a society struggling with its diminution of Islamic identity to one aggressively reassuming it, has influenced the progression of Pamuk's oeuvre and lent a nostalgic tinge to his most recent work. Although Seigel does not actually spell out this progression, he hints at it by tracing the trajectory and development of Pamuk's thought through the evolution of his novels, from its beginnings with *Cevet Bey and his Sons* to *The Museum of Innocence*, his penultimate work.

In his conclusion, Seigel meditates on the significance of culture to the individual and what the similarities and differences of the individuals studied elucidate in this regard. Here too, he briefly discusses Said's thesis of Orientalism in relation to his subjects, and, using them to prove his point, contests the notion that the "objectification" of another culture is necessarily a tool of domination. *Between Cultures* is a thought-provoking book that points to the multi-faceted nature of intercultural identity of figures whose literary coming of age was, in some way, overshadowed by empire. Its intercultural appeal will surely engage a wide interdisciplinary audience.

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