

# **Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoirs**

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## CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	i
ON “TURNING TO THE FOREIGN” .....	i
PREFACE .....	iii
Importance to the Field .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
CONFLICT OF INTEREST .....	vi
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS .....	vii
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER 2 XENOTROPISM</b> .....	7
DEFINING XENOTROPISM .....	8
PAST AND CURRENT THEORIES ABOUT FOREIGNNESS .....	8
MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGNNESS .....	9
XENOTROPISM AND CONCEPTS OF ORIENTALISM/OCCIDENTALISM .....	13
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE REFUGEE, THE EXPATRIATE, THE IMMIGRANT, THE ÉMIGRÉ AND THE FORCED EXILE .....	14
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH XENOTROPISM .....	19
EXPATRIATION AND XENOTROPISM .....	20
THE CHALLENGES OF EXPATRIATISM .....	23
WRITING AS A CATHARTIC PROCESS .....	27
THE AWAKENING OF ARTISTIC AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH XENOTROPISM .....	28
THE MEMOIR GENRE AND XENOTROPISM .....	29
<b>CHAPTER 3 THREE WRITERS AND XENOTROPISM (TURNING TO THE FOREIGN)</b> .....	33
INTRODUCTION .....	33
THE ROMANTIC EXPATRIATE: EMILY HAHN (1905–1997) .....	35
THE POLITICAL ÉMIGRÉ: NIEN CHENG (1915–2009) .....	40
THE EXILE: QIU XIAOLONG (1953–) .....	43
<b>CHAPTER 4 BOUND: AN EXPLORATIVE AUTO-REFLEXIVE CASE STUDY</b> .....	50
SYNOPSIS OF BOUND .....	50
RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS .....	55
LITERARY TECHNIQUES .....	58
REFLECTION .....	62
<b>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION: CONTRIBUTION TO NEW KNOWLEDGE AND FURTHER RESEARCH</b> .....	65
APPENDICES: INTERVIEWS A1 - A11 .....	69
A1 – Isla .....	69
A2 – Amelia .....	72
A3 – Liam .....	75
A4 – Deng .....	78

A5 – Siri .....	81
A6 – Grace .....	85
A7 – Sophie .....	88
A8 – Thomas .....	91
A9 – James .....	93
A10 – Millie .....	96
A11 – Damian .....	99
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	102
<b>NON-PRINT PUBLICATION</b> .....	106
<b>GENERAL REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING</b> .....	106
<b>CONNECT WITH ME ONLINE:</b> .....	110
<b>ABOUT BOUND</b> .....	112
<b>BOUND: AN EXPATRIATE’S JOURNEY TO CHINA AND BEYOND</b> .....	112
<b>SUBJECT INDEX</b> .....	113

## FOREWORD

### ON “TURNING TO THE FOREIGN”

This book is about foreignness and about different kinds of separation from one’s home country. It provides an in-depth theoretical analysis of xenotropism and illustrates its features and challenges.

So how do we understand xenotropism or “turning to the foreign” better? This book provides many answers through an analysis of three prominent writers in Chinese history: *Emily Hahn*, *Nien Cheng* and *Qiu Xiaolong*. It also examines critical literary sources such as memoirs by writers in the East and the West.

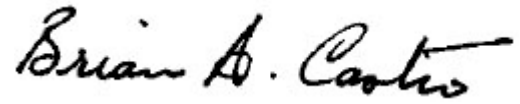
Further, this book illustrates that xenotropism can result in both personal and artistic development. Why then do so few people take risks to live and work in a foreign country? Is it simply because it means leaving one’s home, friends and lifestyles or is it much more complex than this? Yet the benefits like being able to take advantage of new opportunities and acquiring an understanding and acceptance of different cultures far outweigh any losses. It is through taking risks that one learns, grows and fully comes into being.

The experience of xenotropism when perceived as a cathartic process can also initiate memoir-writing and have positive benefits for mental health. Although there have been discussions about the challenges faced through East to West migrations, the literature about West to East migrations is meagre. Yet these are becoming more frequent now due to the advances of technology and the fact that people’s work increasingly involves a global role. There is a general tendency in the West to focus on historic events and lives. This book, through its exploration of expatriates’ lives in the East, deviates from this and in doing so, provides an important contribution to the field of creative writing.

Xenotropism or “turning to the foreign,” results in the ability to see things from different perspectives or through “new windows.” It is through xenotropism that a person can move from being bound up in their own culture and tradition towards becoming a global citizen. This book exemplifies the craft of memoir written through living in a foreign country and explains how this is different from writing from home.

*ii*

This book is a rich collection of personal, research-based, literary and theoretical perspectives on what it takes and what it means to actually *turn to the foreign*. It points beyond itself in that it makes you see things you have not seen before, understand the nature of foreignness within yourself and forms valuable links with the craft of the memoir. I am pleased to be able to recommend it to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian A. Castro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'B' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Brian Castro**

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## PREFACE

This book: *Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoir*, provides a theoretical analysis of xenotropism and undertakes an analysis of three prominent writers in China's history: Emily Hahn (1905-1997), Nien Cheng (1915-2009) and Qiu Xiaolong (1953 -).

Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong were focused upon because they represent different periods in Chinese history, from the early 1900s to the present day. Hahn, Cheng and Xiaolong exemplify three different types of separation from their home countries. Emily Hahn was an American expatriate working in China; Nien Cheng a political émigré, who fled from China to the USA during the Cultural Revolution. Similarly, Qiu Xiaolong is a Chinese exile who has lived in the USA since the late 1960s. Both Hahn and Cheng attempted to directly inform the West about China, through their writing.

Similarly, Xiaolong who is a prolific writer, informs the West about Chinese culture and history, through his character Inspector Chen in his series of detective novels. Hahn, Cheng and Xiaolong survived political persecution and traumas. They turned to writing as a cathartic process and to communicate their ideas to the West. Although Hahn, Cheng and Xiaolong had little choice because of their xenotropic circumstances, they felt they could write more objectively from the West about China, than from their home countries.

A qualitative research design was used which includes a literature review and an analysis of the results of interviews with 11 expatriates, completed in Shanghai during 2012. The interviews explored the challenges of turning to the foreign, through expatriation. Critical and literary sources such as memoirs written by Asian and western writers were examined.

Rebecca Saunder's *Concept of the Foreign* provides many theoretical ideas about xenotropism. Writers such as Judith Barrington in *Writing the Memoir*, provide an explanation of the relationship between memory and the memoir genre. It is envisaged that the e-book will contribute to new knowledge in the field by illustrating that xenotropism or "turning to the foreign", results in both personal and artistic development that facilitates the writing of a memoir. It will also show that the writing of memoir is a cathartic process which has positive benefits for mental health.

Although there have been discussions about the challenges faced through East to West migrations, writer Salman Akhtar argues that the literature about West to East migrations is meagre. Yet these migrations are becoming more frequent now due to the advances of technology and the fact that people's work increasingly involves a global role. The challenges



faced in adapting to a country vastly different from one's own are many, such as those associated with culture, language and ways of living and working.

This e-book: *Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoir* aims to exemplify the craft of memoir written through living in a foreign country, and explain how this is different from writing from home. It will explicate the creation of memoir from a combination of personal, research-based, literary and theoretical perspectives. More specifically, it will show how xenotropism provided a conceptual framework for the memoir: *Bound: An Expatriate's Journey to China and Beyond* (Christine Lavender, 2014). Information and links to "About *Bound*" are contained at the end of this e-book.

### **Importance to the Field**

Much good writing has been published about expatriatism in China, examples of which are: Emily Hahn's memoir *China to Me* (1944) and her biography of *The Soong Sisters* (1941); Nien Cheng's memoir on *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1986); author J.G. Ballard's novel *Empire of the Sun* (2005); and Xiaolong Qiu's memoir *Years of Red Dust* (2010). There is an absence of memoirs which explore expatriate experiences and how xenotropism leads to transformation, in terms of both artistic and personal development. The use of xenotropism as a theoretical basis for the e-book injects a positive agency into the normally negative aspects of displacement and provides an artistic dimension to the tribulations of foreignness. The experience of xenotropism can initiate memoir writing and therefore presents a viable field for further research in the creative writing process.

Xenotropism creates change and transforms a person. Although one may consider this to be a normal expectation, the extent of the change and its impact on an individual's future can be quite dramatic. The xenotropism of Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong was examined through historical research of their lives and a critical analysis of their writing, which illuminates their respective experiences. The foreign experiences of contemporary expatriates living in Shanghai, is reported through an analysis of informal face to face interviews undertaken in 2012.

Further investigation of the impact of xenotropism on the trajectories of the lives of expatriates is essential to illustrate the challenges they face and how these are overcome. Through the illumination and writing of real stories, we may achieve a better understanding of the challenges faced by expatriates and the contributions they continue to make to our emerging global society. This book can help to fill this gap in the field and illuminate a path for other disciplines to follow. At the moment of writing, nothing seems to be more urgent for one's artistic and personal development. It is through xenotropism that a person can move from being "bound" up in their own culture and traditions, to becoming "unbound" into a new

hybrid form as a global citizen. Perhaps in this way, a real contribution can be made.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book could not have been conceived without the foreign experience of living and working in Shanghai. My fellow expatriates through providing valuable input have enhanced the integrity and realism of the research. I appreciated their accessibility and openness during the interview process. I acknowledge the expert advice of my mentor Professor Brian Castro, Chair of Creative Writing, University of Adelaide during the completion of the research. As a Visiting Research Fellow, I am indebted to their provision of facilities and technical support which has enabled me to complete the e-book: *Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoir*.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my husband David for his support and encouragement throughout the writing process and whilst in Shanghai, even when he needed me the most. A special thanks to my sons Nikolas and Aleksander who willingly supported me on my return from Shanghai.

This e-book is dedicated to the city of Shanghai and my Chinese friends who welcomed me into their city and their lives, who guided me in all aspects of my life there from finding my way around to carrying out my work role, purchasing, renovating and eventually selling an apartment and remained faithfully at my side during my subsequent departure. They explained to me what I did not understand, patiently and repeatedly made efforts to communicate with me in a language not their own, took on responsibilities often outside the realm of friendship and showed me how to see the world differently. They remain my greatest teachers.

This research is integrally linked to the memoir *Bound*, which constitutes an explorative auto-reflexive case study in this book. Through the transformative process of xenotropism or turning to the foreign as an expatriate, I as Emily Hahn wrote in *China to Me*, have learnt to see through “new windows.”

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This e-book is based upon original research. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest to the author’s knowledge in the entire e-book, nor in any of the chapters.

## List of Photographs

1. **Emily Hahn** - *No Hurry to Go Home*, <http://www.amazon.com> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013).
2. **Nien Cheng** - , <http://www.telegraph.co.uk> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013).
3. **Qiu Xiaolong** - , Emailed by author on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013.



*Emily Hahn*



*Nien Cheng*



*Qiu Xiaolong*

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## **Introduction**

**Abstract:** Chapter 1 through providing a theoretical analysis of xenotropism, illustrates the psychological and political consequences of living in a foreign country for refugees, expatriates, emigres and exiles. The research in this e-book demonstrates that living in a foreign country for an extended period, causes an intense and vivid transformation in artistic and personal development. This Chapter points to the dearth of research in this area and between xenotropism, the cathartic process of writing of memoir and mental health.

**Keywords:** Artistic development, Challenges, China, Culture shock, Existential, Expatriation, Foreign, Global, Memoir, Personal development, Research, Transformation, Xenotropism.

The central idea in this book is an exploration of the relationship between xenotropism or “turning to the foreign” and the “awakening” of artistic and personal development. It provides a theoretical analysis of xenotropism and discusses the psychological and political consequences of living in a foreign country for refugees, expatriates, émigrés and exiles. Therefore, the three research areas to be investigated in this research are to: define xenotropism and explore its features and challenges; undertake an analysis of three prominent writers in China’s history; and explore the relationship between the memoir genre, xenotropism and its impact on mental health.

“Xenotropism”, according to writer Rebecca Saunders, in her book *The Concept of the Foreign*, extrapolates how “turning to the foreign” may facilitate artistic and self-development (180). This research examines the foreign experiences of three prominent writers: Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong during

different periods of China's development. It explains how writing a memoir from a foreign land can awaken new artistic practices as shown in the works of these three writers.

This research proposes that xenotropism can lead to transformations in both personal and artistic development. This does not mean the surface adaptation by a traveler when encountering a Western environment, but rather demonstrates that living in a foreign country like China for an extended period causes a much more intense and vivid transformation. This results in the sloughing off of the "snakeskin" of one's usual preoccupations and societal standards, and the increased capacity to become more attuned to the present foreign environment. As Gerald Kennedy expressed in *Imagining Paris*:

... that a lengthy stay in an alien place, must produce certain changes in the way one feels, thinks, sees and writes (27).

Xenotropic theory provides a conceptual framework for the memoir *Bound*. It illustrates through narrative research that, although an expatriate may appear the same on the surface, their inner values and view of the world changes significantly. This e-book illustrates that xenotropism can lead to a change of career or facilitate the development of one's artistic vocation as was the case with Emily Hahn who was a prolific writer about China and Qiu Xiaolong, the author of many detective novels about his character, Inspector Chen. Many examples of how xenotropism leads to both the personal and artistic development of expatriates are portrayed in *Bound*.

This book draws attention to the absence of contemporary memoirs by foreigners about China since the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, what it was like to live there and the challenges one faced, at least from a western perspective. There is a dearth of memoirs about how xenotropism can lead to transformation in terms of both artistic and personal development, and its relationship to mental health.

Memoirs set in foreign places create an awareness of what it is like to live in another place and facilitate an understanding of different cultures from a deeper viewpoint. They may have a literary role in minimizing xenophobia as the world

becomes increasingly more global, through technology and other advances. It is the case of being in a real place, rather than a virtual one.

Writing a memoir from one's home city such as Adelaide is totally different from the experience of writing one about a foreign city like Shanghai. The desire and commitment to leave one's home country is "existential" in nature because it is a planned decision involving choice. Existentialism is a philosophical theory which emphasizes existence of the individual as a free and self determining agent. Prominent existentialists include Martin Heidegger (*Being and Time*), Soren Kierkegaard (*The Concept of Anxiety*) and Jean-Paul Satre (*Being and Nothingness*). I believe that its concepts are meaningful and have practical applications, such as the notion of agency and availability to risk and danger.

Existential concepts such as "freedom", "belonging" and "choice" provide a fuller understanding of what it means to leave one's country and become a foreigner. Many people talk about living overseas, but few possess the courage to take on the risks which impact on all aspects of their lives. For example, there are physical, emotional, financial, family and career challenges to consider.

Whilst many expatriates may flourish within a foreign environment, a few may also flounder which may result in a shortened expatriation. All expatriates experience challenges and difficulties on returning to their home countries and some never return because it is just too hard or they prefer to stay in their host country. Others may experience mental health issues, for example, "culture shock" following arrival in a foreign country or "reverse culture shock" on return home, during the resettling process. Xenotropism, therefore, is a complex term which can attract both positive and negative consequences.

The memoir *Bound*, as an auto-reflexive case study illustrates that although the decision to live in another country involves risk, it unleashes opportunities for learning, discovering and becoming. Together, xenotropism and the writing of these experiences in memoir form present a power to transform both personal and artistic development. This is because, put very simply, the experiences are recorded for others to read. Language is a powerful tool and xenotropic or foreign experiences can be aptly communicated through the writing of memoir. This

## Xenotropism

**Abstract:** Chapter 2 defines xenotropism, past and current theories of foreignness and the meaning and characteristics of foreignness. It asserts that current thinking perceives the image of the foreign differently. No longer does it see the foreigner as a neurotic artist, but describes it as an expatriating process towards self development. This section is courageous in its attempt to describe the nature of a spiritual experience and how this relates to experiencing the foreign. The difference between travelling to a foreign country and actually living there are not the same. Although many people confess they would like to go abroad and live in a foreign country, fewer take the risk to do so. This section also explains that after a long period of time in a foreign country, an expatriate may begin to see it as “home”. This chapter states that there is a need for a new approach to foreignness so that it is not feared. It suggests that this may be accomplished through the merging of the foreign and non-foreign into a new hybrid form. It also examines the differences between the Refugee, the Expatriate, the Immigrant, the Émigré and the Forced Exile. It examines the transformative process of xenotropism or turning to the foreign and discusses the challenges of expatriation. Chapter 2 explores writing as a cathartic process which can alleviate the effects of culture shock. It asserts that a transformative experience in a foreign country can facilitate an understanding and acceptance of different cultures, impact positively and negatively on mental health and represent viable material for writing memoir.

**Keywords:** Artistic development, Culture, Exile, Expatriatism, Foreignness, Hybridity, Immigrant, Memoir, Mental Health, Occidentalism, Orientalism, Post-Colonial Studies, Refugee, Shock, Transformation, Xenotropism.

The writer is a secret criminal. How? ... The writer has a foreign origin; we do not know about the particular nature of these foreigners, but we feel ... that someone is calling them back ... The foreign origin of the book makes the scene of writing one of immeasurable separation ... we write, we paint, through our entire lives as if we were going to a foreign country, as if we were foreigners inside our own families (Helene Cixous, 1991:72).

Christine Velde

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## **DEFINING XENOTROPISM**

Coco Owen described “xenotropism” as artistic expatriation which she perceives “in terms of a figure: a trope, a turn, a swerve, an existential ornamentation that is anything but significant” (47). This turning to the foreign is synonymous with leaving the home country (expatriatism) as the creative work for the artist becomes the true family. Xenotropism is a positive connotation of foreignness which is associated with the possibility of new engagements with the world through personal and artistic development. Cultural and environmental factors, however, will influence whether or not xenotropism, through expatriation, will be successful.

The images of the foreign have been used to describe the psychology of the artist, the inherent “otherness” often portrayed as wildness, to explain how we are simultaneously ourselves, and not ourselves. Rebecca Saunders in *The Concept of the Foreign*, adds that the theoretical assertions about foreignness help us to understand how they have moved from being perceived as a type of neurosis, towards personal and artistic development.

## **PAST AND CURRENT THEORIES ABOUT FOREIGNNESS**

Psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung perceived a relationship to the foreign through expatriation or exile as being associated with a neurosis which required treatment. It seems that for Freud and Jung, turning to the foreign was an inward turn towards the strangeness of images, instincts and impulses which was frowned upon at home. Jung’s and Freud’s work initially focused on artists in search of a vocation and they perceived them as having an incarnate “otherness” or “wildness”.

Carl Jung in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* was deeply ambivalent about the disorientating pull of the foreign on his trips overseas. In India, he feared the power of the country or perhaps he experienced xenophobia and wanted to go home (269). Freud opened up the interior self for exploration through diagnosis and interpretation of dreams to understand the foreign within us. He adopted the word “expatriation” which comes from the Latin verb “exspatiare”, which means to wander or digress, or to move freely about, or at will. Freud’s work culminated

in the publication of the *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1960 (6).

Coco Owen in *The Concept of the Foreign* explains that “xenotropism” is technically used in microbiology to refer to a class of inactive viruses, which require exogamy with another species in order to replicate. She asserts that Freud worked with xenotropism where he claimed the unconscious as his territory and irrationality as its foreignness. Freud therefore, used a physiological perspective of xenotropism as a frame of reference for legitimizing his psychoanalytic theories (183).

In contrast British and American writers such as James Hillman in *Re-Visioning Psychology* and Henry Miller in *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, used expatriation as a confirmation of their artistic calling. Hillman explicitly leaves behind Jung’s and Freud’s theories, towards what he refers to as “Western cultural imagination”. He has sought to locate psychology in a third position, that of the “soul”, which he perceives as a perspective of seeing through myths and values (55). Hillman insists that there is always “a poem at the heart of things” (60). Therefore Hillman focused on the visual image as his method, rather than on physiological case histories, as did Freud and Jung.

Current thinking asserts that the image of the foreign has undergone analysis so that the artist no longer represents the exemplary neurotic but rather an expatriating turn towards self-development. The meaning and characteristics of foreignness need to be examined more closely in order to acquire a full understanding of it and its relationship to different kinds of separation.

### **MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGNNESS**

According to Rebecca Saunders in *The Concept of the Foreign*, the primary meaning of “foreignness” is *not belonging*. She describes at least four nuances of belonging: (1) to belong is to be bound by ties of affection or association, (2) to become part of some whole outside of oneself, for example, a community or a religious institution, (3) to be classified with a group and (4) to conform, and finally to have an unquestioned usual place of living .

Saunders states that foreignness is defined from the Latin term meaning “outside”

## Three Writers and Xenotropism (Turning to the Foreign)

**Abstract:** Chapter 3 explores the lives and writing of three writers who lived during difficult and often traumatic periods in China. Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong made sense of their different displacements through their writing. Emily Hahn, the expatriate and a prolific writer about China, attempted to inform the West about its culture and people. In contrast to the romantic adventures of Emily Hahn, the political émigré Nien Cheng, documented her harrowing experiences as a prisoner during the Cultural Revolution. Qiu Xiaolong the exile, fled to the United States during the Cultural Revolution. He remains loyal to China and feels he can write more objectively about Chinese history and culture from a distance. Qiu Xiaolong aptly accomplishes this through his character Inspector Chen in his continuing series of detective novels, in which he captures China's culture and political past.

**Keywords:** Artistic, Catharsis, China, Cultural Revolution, Culture shock, Émigré, Exile, Expatriation, Foreign, Global, Memoir, Poetry, Shanghai, Tiananmen Square, Transformation, Writing, Xenotropism.

### INTRODUCTION

Expatriation early in one's career can be a sign of vocation. The artist as a figure of the foreign can *turn* to expatriation through xenotropism. It is difficult to change one's homegrown self for an artistic one and therefore, displacement through expatriation can affect personal and artistic transformation.

Although an artist risks losing connections and tradition, they may be able to remake themselves into the image of the foreign. In expatriation, an artist attempts to re-create an identity with their own sense of self. They may then be able to

re-imagine this on their return home and offer something different in their creative works.

In reflecting on xenotropism, Saunders wonders what was lacking at “home” for the expatriate writers and artists in terms of privacy, recognition and nourishment. What inadequacies were there in the workplace? Furthermore, what was the culture unable to offer – affirmation of one’s artistic identity, support, *etc.*? From a family perspective, a creative child needs time and space to be alone in a supportive environment so that they can create. If artists receive all of these things, then they may not need to be expatriated because they would be free to travel and to be themselves (197).

Expatriate writers must have the inner resources to benefit from experience in a foreign country. In a sense, the resources of Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong have also exhibited a raw vastness, which demands “daring” in the exploration of unfamiliar territory as described by William Walsh in *Patrick White: Voss*. Their lives cannot be viewed through the prism of traditional middle-class trajectories, because they have been played out on a much larger stage. There are those who may be unable to reorient themselves through art due to earlier wounding or inadequate creative opportunities. Therefore, xenotropism through expatriation can facilitate both artistic and personal development; but one has to have the inner strength for it to occur as is aptly explained by Owen:

Turning to the foreign permits reconstruction of ... the internal dynamism necessary to persist and create – given a workable foundation and enough resilience to endure changes ... an artist may recognize that one belongs to the tradition of one’s art (198).

Xenotropism, however, is not without its challenges as exemplified in the analysis of three writers who lived during different periods in China. Emily Hahn, Nien Cheng and Qiu Xiaolong made sense of their different displacements through their writing. Perhaps writing acted as a cathartic process in understanding their experiences and ensuring they did not forget “their” China. Through writing, they seemed to alleviate the general trauma experienced during specific periods in China and the impact of culture shock when they moved to the United States. As Martha Davis aptly writes about the healing power of poetry in “Against Daily

Insignificance: Writing through Grief”:

... language became my sanity and strength ... Poetry, whether found in poems or in prose, cuts through noise and hurt, opens the wound to clean it, and then gradually teaches it to heal itself (303).

The first of the three writers to be analysed is “the romantic expatriate”, Emily Hahn. A prolific writer about China, Hahn, through her writing, attempted to inform the West about Chinese culture and people.

### **THE ROMANTIC EXPATRIATE: EMILY HAHN (1905–1997)**

Writer Emily Hahn was born in St Louis and passed away in 1997. Academic Staci Ford, in her book chapter “Deeply, almost domestically at home in the world”, notes that Hahn was a prolific writer and an unconventional woman. Emily Hahn was author of 52 books and 181 *New Yorker* essays. Her two most popular works were both China-centred: her biography, *The Soong Sisters* (1941), and her partial autobiography, *China to Me* (1944). Historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom, in “Searching for Emily Hahn on the Streets of St Louis”, asserts that Emily Hahn should be given a star on the “Walk of Fame” in St Louis owing to the quality of her writing (221).

In Hahn’s memoir, *No Hurry to Get Home*, she writes about the fact that prior to her travels, she studied to become an engineer and was the only woman studying in this discipline at the university. She also travelled widely in the Belgian Congo, before moving to Shanghai in the 1930s. What was intended as a short trip to China lasted almost 10 years between 1930 and 1940. She lived mostly in Shanghai, making occasional trips to Chungking and Hong Kong. During this period, she worked as a reporter and immersed herself in the social life of both the Chinese and expatriate communities. Emily Hahn was flamboyant in her attire and eccentric in her tastes in that she liked gibbons, smoked cigars and became an opium addict for two years.

Hahn led quite a scandalous personal life when during World War II she became pregnant to Charles Boxer, the local head of British army intelligence, based in Hong Kong and already married. Prior to that, she had an affair with Chinese poet

## ***Bound: An Explorative Auto-Reflexive Case Study***

**Abstract:** Chapter 4 begins with a synopsis of *Bound*, and then details the research design and process. The three areas of the research were to: define xenotropism and explain its features and complications, undertake an analysis of three prominent writers in China's history and interrogate the relationship between the memoir genre and xenotropism and their links to mental health. A qualitative research design was adopted which employed several techniques: historical research, journaling, interviews and photography. The 11 expatriates were sourced through a search of literary associations and the adoption of the "snowball sampling" technique. A variety of literary techniques were used to design and create the memoir *Bound*, and the use of Chinese poetry is also justified. Chapter 4 includes a reflection on the research and writing process. It concludes that xenotropism through expatriation, is a transformative process which facilitates artistic and personal development and represents a viable path for the writing of memoir.

**Keywords:** Autobiography, Awakening, Biography, *Bound*, China, Chinese poetry, Epiphanal, Ethnography, Expatriate, Foreign, Ghost voice, Interviews, Journalling, Literary Techniques, Memory, Narrative research, Qualitative research, Shadow, Shanghai, Spirituality, Transnational, Xenotropism.

We want to know how the world looks from inside another person's experience: who really lived and tells about experiences that did occur. (Jill Ker-Conway, 1996:6)

### **SYNOPSIS OF *BOUND***

*Bound* is a memoir about a ten year association with Shanghai and its people between 2002 and 2012. The writer adopted the name "Kristen", which is similar to the Chinese pinyin version of "Christine" ("Kelisting") in an attempt to provide an objective account of her experiences. Using a similar but different name,

Christine Velde

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helped her to probe deep into her memories and to alleviate the self-consciousness she felt in writing about herself. “Kristen” provided her with more distance and the persona was like a double, a shadow or “ghost” of herself. The concept of “ghost” is a familiar and integral thread throughout the memoir *Bound*.

The writer adopted her maiden name of “Lavender” as the author of *Bound*, to distinguish her former academic career in education from her emerging one in creative writing. This decision was also based on the fact that many other writers and artists have used pseudonyms or fictitious names.

The memoir also includes interviews in narrative form with other expatriates who were living in Shanghai and Hong Kong in 2012. Expatriatism may be the requirement of a job or result from a life change, for example, as a result of forming a long-term relationship with a person from another culture. Kristen is a self-initiated expatriate who chose to live and work in Shanghai, China.

*Bound* represents the writer’s spiritual journey in completing the memoir about a period of her life as an expatriate in Shanghai, the transformation that took place during the process and on resettling in Australia. Elizabeth Andrew, in *Writing the Sacred Journey*, describes this journey as consisting of three qualities: the writer uncovers, probes and honours what is sacred in his or her life story; the writing process itself is a means to spiritual growth; and the end product makes the evidence of the sacred available to the reader. Andrew defines spirituality “... as the dimension of our being that relates to the inexplicable” (71).

The writer attempts to describe “spirituality” in *Bound* in various ways. For example, she refers to writer Robert Dessaix’s concept of “voodoo,” makes reference to a “numinous” experience when “Kristen” walks out on her academic position, and comment upon writer Brian Castro’s experience of an “ataraxia” after which he leaves his life and departs for Shanghai in *Shanghai Dancing*. Writer John Fitzgerald’s explanation of the Chinese concept of “awakening” or a “sudden awakening to the light”, can be likened to a spiritual perspective, which may have originated from Buddhist philosophy.

*Bound* represents a reflective rendering of who “Kristen” was before her journey was launched and then afterwards, like taking before and after photographs. While

in Shanghai, she was surprised by her yearning to be free and reflected on the existentialist philosophers she had studied in her undergraduate studies:

Years later I learnt that there was a relationship between being “foreign” and “freedom ... Through freedom all things are possible according to Heidegger, “the possible is the future”. Perhaps this is how I often felt as I walked the streets of Shanghai (*Bound*:35).

The experience of living in Shanghai and subsequently writing *Bound* includes “epiphanal” moments which Elizabeth Andrew describes as transformative revelations that join two worlds: the spiritual and the literary. Epiphanal moments are episodes of numinosity experienced like a veil being dropped from our eyes. Epiphanies invite us to explore the mystery of our lives and these are bound to the realm of change.

Andrew states that the reader wants to know about the “spiritual darkness” or the consequences of suffering and how this is integrated into one’s life. Therefore, the writer illustrates the personal crises that Kristen encounters and how she overcomes them. For example, on her return to Australia, Kristen experiences difficulty in finding a job, the breakdown of a relationship, loss of her home, financial problems and the lack of a support network. The writer documented the problematic relationship between Kristen and Tyson, her former partner, who was a “trailing spouse”. After a long period living in Shanghai, it was difficult for Kristen to resettle in Australia. Millie, an entrepreneur, expresses how she found resettlement during an interview for *Bound*:

It took ages to re-engage with family and friends, work colleagues and resulted in some casualties, for example, some relationships never recovered (*Bound*:210/211).

Through the process of overcoming the challenges of living in a foreign country, Kristen becomes irretrievably changed in her view of the world which leads to transformation in both her personal and professional life. Julia Kristeva in *Strangers to Ourselves* and Anne-Meike Fechter in *Transnational Lives* discussed the notion of “uncanniness” or “strangeness”. They explained it as being frightened of the foreign and the unsettling of identities through living in a foreign



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## Conclusion: Contribution to New Knowledge and Further Research

**Abstract:** The research in this book illustrates that most discussions about cultural differences tend to focus on East to West migrations. The experience of xenotropism can initiate memoir writing and therefore presents a viable field for further research. The extent of transformation as a result of foreignness in terms of both artistic and personal development, has been little studied in the literature. It is through xenotropism that one can move from being “bound” up in their own culture, to becoming “unbound” into a new hybrid form, as a global citizen.

**Keywords:** Artistic development, Catalyst, China, Cross-disciplinary, Culture, East, Expatriates, Foreign, Global citizens, Global writing, Journaling, Memoir, Mental health, Migrations, Personal development, Photography, Questionnaires, Research methods, Transformation, West, Xenotropism.

Much good writing has been published about expatriatism in China, examples of which are: Emily Hahn’s memoir *China to Me* (1944) and her biography of *The Soong Sisters* (1941); Nien Cheng’s memoir on *Life and Death in Shanghai* (1986); author J.G. Ballard’s novel *Empire of the Sun* (2005); and Xiaolong Qiu’s memoir *Years of Red Dust* (2010). There is an absence of memoirs which explore expatriate experiences and how xenotropism leads to transformation, in terms of both artistic and personal development.

It also seems that most discussions on cultural differences tend to focus on East to West migrations, despite the fact that those who migrate from the West to the East also face challenges. There is a dearth of research about the impact of these separations from one’s home country on the mental health of expatriates. Writer

Salman Akhtar argues that “literature on West-to-East migration is, however, meager and further investigation of this realm is needed” (22). This research fills a gap in the literature by highlighting the challenges faced by western expatriates moving from the West to the East.

Rebecca Saunders in *The Concept of the Foreign* examines xenotropism largely from a western perspective, for example, there is considerable mention of artists going to Paris to write. There appears to be a lack of research about the challenges faced by western expatriates who live in the East. Living in an old and unique culture like China causes a more intense transformation both personally in questioning one’s own values, and professionally in working in a rapidly changing environment with very different cultural mores. It is easier to write about the East on return home, because one can more objectively see the differences between the East and the West and over time, in oneself.

Chinese writers in exile have played the role of transmitters of knowledge from the West to the East since the May Fourth event: this was a political movement which grew out of student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1919. It was a protest against the Chinese Government’s weak response to foreign powers and a call for Western democracy to strengthen a new China.

The research has the capacity to contribute to the transmission of knowledge from the East to the West, but primarily from a western expatriate perspective. For example, this may include the benefits of xenotropism such as the time and space in which to develop one’s creative work or vocation, to facilitate new insights and to take advantage of emerging opportunities. The research illustrates the risks faced by moving to a foreign country and the challenges that expatriates encounter both there and on their return home.

The use of xenotropism as a theoretical basis for the memoir *Bound* injects a positive agency into the normally negative aspects of displacement and provides an artistic dimension to the tribulations of foreignness. The experience of xenotropism can initiate memoir writing and therefore presents a viable field for further research in the creative writing process.

Australia is distanced physically from the rest of the world. The literature

illustrates parochialism and xenophobia within the Australian population. This research may help to inform, raise awareness and create attitude change about other cultures beyond the often prurient process of seeking after tragedy.

Xenotropism creates change and transforms a person. Although one may consider this to be a normal expectation, the extent of the change and its impact on an individual's future as illustrated in the memoir are quite dramatic. The extent of transformation as a result of foreignness in terms of both artistic and personal development has been little studied in the literature.

The research in this study illustrated that the city of Shanghai acted as a catalyst which propelled the expatriates towards new directions in a dramatic way. Their view of the world and how they would fit into it in the future changed. Following their foreign experiences, the expatriates decided they did not want to go home but either preferred to stay in China or would move to another country in the future. Most of the expatriates perceived themselves as emerging "global citizens".

This research illustrates that there is a relationship between xenotropism, the memoir genre and mental health which has not been much examined in the literature. The writing of memoir is a cathartic process which helps one to search deep into one's memories, reflecting upon and writing about painful experiences. This process is not only helpful to the writer but provides the reader with the opportunity to learn about real stories. Future studies could explore the relationship between xenotropism and the use of the memoir genre from a mental health perspective.

Researching and writing a memoir is a difficult, emotional process. Many people who have experienced some form of displacement may either not have the opportunity or lack the skills required to put their experiences in writing. Further investigation of the impact of xenotropism on the trajectories of the lives of expatriates is essential to illuminate the challenges they face and how these are overcome. There is a tendency in the West to focus on historic events and lives. An exploration of expatriates' lives in the East represents a viable field of research in creative writing. Through the illumination and writing of real stories,

## **APPENDICES: INTERVIEWS A1 - A11**

## A1 – Isla

Name: Isla Gender: F Age range: early to mid-40s Nationality: Australian

Position: Self-employed: artist, musician, yoga teacher

1. *How long have you/did you live in Shanghai?*  
Four years – from Byron Bay.
2. *Where else have you lived as an expatriate?*  
NA
3. *How would you contextualize expatriatism with regard to your life?*  
I question the nature of “home” – more global perspective now, which is more obvious when away from home. Living globally impacts on the nature of home. Home in Australia feels disconnected from the rest of the world.
4. *Describe your experiences of living in Shanghai/China.*  
Very open in Shanghai and accepting of projects I have put forward. Came to support husband who works in the area of resource environments, *i.e.*, coal mining, putting in place workplace strategies.
5. *Give some examples of the challenges or personal traumas you have experienced?*  
Yoga teacher, musician and artist. Contract for three years with *Yoga Plus* which is one of the largest yoga companies in China. Opposite experience with the Australian art world. Came together for me here in Shanghai after studies in fine art. School fees are high for international students, (RMB 65,000 for two children each year) so I booked them into a Chinese school. I am now worried that their English is lagging behind their Chinese language so I have to do something about this. No English is taught at the school.
6. *Did you experience any personal trauma with regard to your relationships, e.g. spouse/partner or family?*
  - (1) Personal disappointment that husband’s business folded and we lost a lot of money in Shanghai. Very frustrating. Not understanding how to implement a business in China. Husband is now on “sabbatical”.
  - (2) Lot of expats here are people who have come to Shanghai to survive due to collapsing economies in western European countries.
7. *China has a dramatic history of revolutions, wars and battles. Do you remember stories of past personal or family traumas? Please give an example:*  
Friend whose parents were researchers/scientists had to escape during Cultural Revolution by travelling to Harbin. Mother died on the way. Reading *The Good*

70 *Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoirs* Christine Velde

*Earth and Wild Swans* gave me a sense of compassion for the culture and the people who live in it. Husband's employees assert that they do not remember Tiananmen Square or that it did not happen in 1989.

8. *Do you contribute to any networks or groups within Shanghai/Hong Kong? Shanghai Creative – painting, Wellness Works – yoga, Shanghai Mamas.com, which is a community expat group of mothers.*
9. *How do you feel being an expatriate has impacted on your writing/business/art?*  
Last 12 months put together *Slow Songs for a Fast World* – songs about emotional storytelling, e.g. resilience and the extremities of climate in China, street names and directions home, experience of place, wishes and wishbones. For example, when looking at a wishbone after an Australian Christmas, making a wish with a sibling and transferring these ideas to another culture. Have completed a charcoal drawing of a series of wishbones.
10. *Do you think your expatriate experiences have changed you and if so, in what way?*  
Gained confidence: it is a wonderful combination with past study. Like to help others through yoga, connect to their health, breath and well-being. I currently teach yoga to 30 pregnant Chinese mothers.
11. *Where do you feel is “home” e.g. one particular place or many places, your birth country?*  
Shanghai at the moment is where my heart is. However, I have a 12-year-old in Australia and miss him, have not seen him for six months. I can't talk about it or I start to cry.
12. *How do you feel when you go back to your birth country, e.g. feelings of alienation or reverse culture shock? It is 18 months since I have been back to Bryon Bay. I notice when I go back to Sydney, there are times when there is no one in the CBD area. In Shanghai, always plenty of people around.*
13. *Has your world view changed and if so, in what way? e.g. “home” is not in one place any more, more accepting of other cultures?*  
More accepting of other cultures. Ignorant when I came here and had a narrow perspective. Now my view is more varied. Shanghai is quite different to the rest of China. Very much a relationship focus here, everything is focused on *guanxi*. I feel that the Chinese are empowered by the nature of the government to look after themselves.
14. *How do you view the term “place attachment” e.g. are you attached to any one place?*  
Difficult position financially. Lot of debt at home and here. Put all money into husband's business and it crashed. Shanghai is a safe haven. However, lot of

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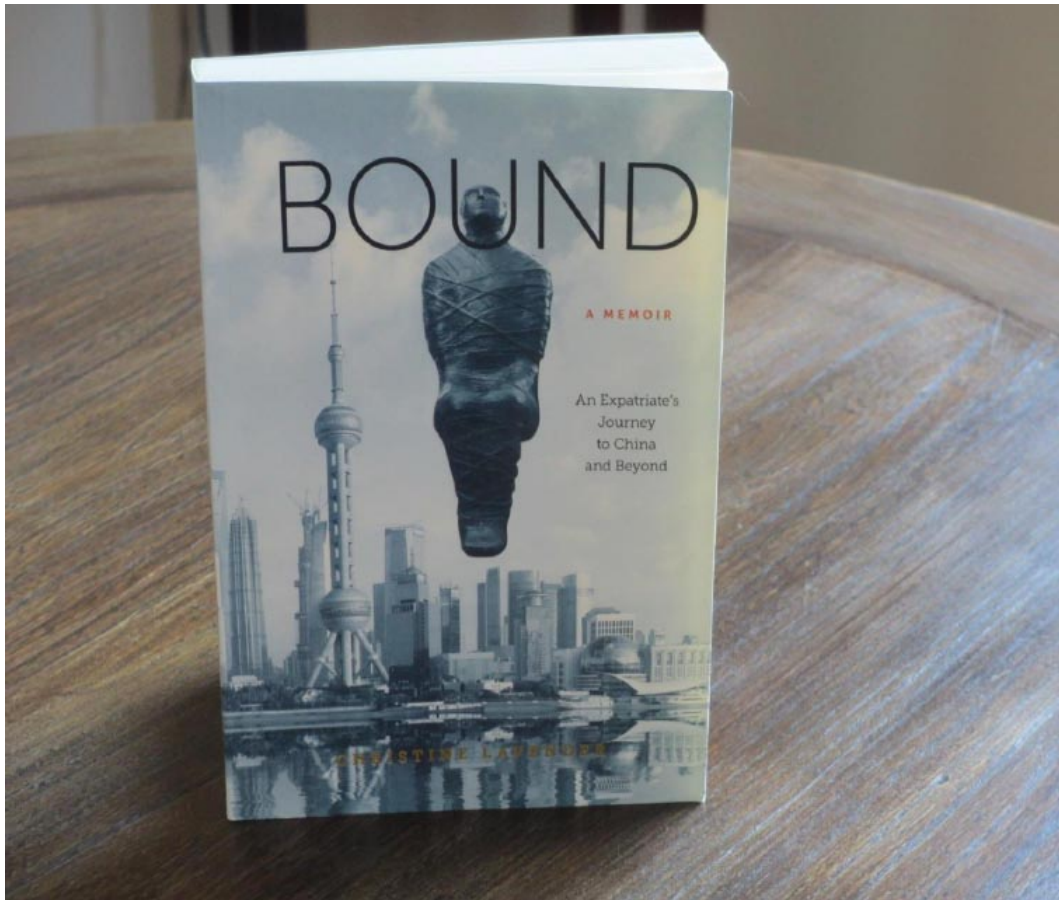
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## About *Bound*

### ***BOUND: AN EXPATRIATE'S JOURNEY TO CHINA AND BEYOND***

Christine Lavender

**Non-Fiction – Memoir**

**ISBN: 978-1-922238-26-9 (pbk).**

This literary memoir explores the reasons why “Kristen”, an Australian expatriate and others from Australia, Europe and the UK choose to live and work in a very different culture to their own and the challenges they face in China. Although there have been discussions about challenges faced through East to West migrations, the literature about West to East migrations is meagre. Yet these migrations are becoming more frequent due to the advances of technology and the fact that people’s work increasingly involves a global role. “Bound” helps to fill this gap in the literature.

*Bound: An Expatriate’s Journey to China and Beyond*, illustrates the experiences of both Chinese and western expatriates and their contributions to life and work in Shanghai.

Philosophical and literary themes such as loss, attachment to place, freedom and transformation are highlighted throughout. Photos which depict the daily life and some of the history of Shanghai are included. Poetry was considered integral to the writing of the memoir because it provides a more layered and visual meaning, than prose alone can express. The poetry is mostly Chinese, but also includes three poems written by the author.

Interviews were carried out with other expatriates (strategists, entrepreneurs, artists, architects and writers) both in Shanghai and Hong Kong during May, 2012, and are reported in narrative form. The memoir differs from other works in the field in that there seems to be an absence of contemporary memoirs about Shanghai - the people, the city, the events that shaped it and what it was like to live there from a western expatriate’s perspective. Nor are there memoirs that show how a “turning to the foreign,” leads to irretrievable change and transformation in both artistic and personal development. The “Epilogue” presents the view that the expatriates represent a Chinese version of “tide players” or “movers” and shakers” who are incrementally moving a contemporary China forward.

*Bound* aims to ensure that the past is not forgotten. It emphasises the importance of the freedom to choose and create one’s life, to take risks and live “outside the square.” These attract opportunities for learning, discovering and becoming. “Bound” highlights that few take risks to live their life differently. Living in a foreign country also attracts many challenges for

**112 *Xenotropism and the Awakening of Literary Expatriatism through Writing Memoirs* Christine Velde**

expatriates, such as “culture shock.” Writing a memoir acts as a cathartic process, which helps to make sense of an expatriate’s experience, and leads to “seeing through new windows.”

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## SUBJECT INDEX

### A

Artistic development i, iii, 7, 8, 22, 23, 29, 39, 65  
Autobiography 29, 30, 35, 37, 50, 56, 58, 64  
Awakening i, iii, iv, vi, 3, 10, 28, 29, 50, 51, 103

### B

Biography iv, 35, 37, 38, 50, 56, 65  
Bound i, iv, vi, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 27, 30, 42, 56, 68, 94, 104, 111

### C

Catalyst 53, 65, 67  
Catharsis 27, 33, 39  
Challenges i, iii, iv, 7, 11, 14, 34, 38, 42, 62, 72, 75, 78, 81, 85, 88, 91, 93, 96, 111  
China iii, iv, vi, 3, 4, 6, 13, 21, 22, 28, 29, 50, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89, 111  
Chinese poetry 47, 48, 50, 61  
Cross-disciplinary 65, 68  
Cultural Revolution iii, 4, 21, 28, 29, 33, 39, 40, 59, 61, 62, 69, 78, 79, 82, 83, 99  
Culture i, iii, iv, 3, 5, 7, 11, 18, 21, 29, 31, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 59, 65, 66, 68, 70, 73, 76, 79, 83, 86, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 106, 107, 111, 112

### E

Epiphanal 50, 52  
Ethnography 30, 50, 56, 107  
Exile iii, 14, 22, 29, 32, 33, 42, 43, 48, 66, 108  
Existential 3, 5, 8, 12, 15

Expatriate iii, iv, vi, 4, 7, 29, 39, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 60, 62, 65, 66, 104, 105, 107, 108, 111, 112  
Expatriation iii, 3, 5, 33, 34, 39, 50, 62, 64, 68, 103, 107

### F

Foreign vi, 29, 45, 48, 50, 62, 73, 81, 82, 85, 92, 100, 105, 109, 111  
Foreignness i, ii, iv, 19, 29, 60, 65-67

### G

Ghost voice 17, 50, 60  
Global i, 3, 5, 12, 14, 23, 33, 44, 47, 59, 65, 71, 73, 74, 76, 79, 86, 90, 92, 94, 97, 100, 101, 107, 111

### H

Hybridity 7, 13, 14, 31

### I

Immigrant 7, 14, 16, 20, 92, 108  
Interviews iii, iv, 6, 9, 50, 51, 68, 102, 104, 108, 111

### J

Journalling 50, 55

### L

Literary Techniques 6, 49, 50, 58

### M

Memoir vi, 17, 18, 22, 26, 35, 37, 40, 42, 45, 48, 50, 51, 102, 105, 108, 111, 112  
Memory iii, 19, 30, 31, 41, 48, 50, 63, 83, 103-105  
Mental Health i, iii, 20, 22, 28, 31, 39, 42, 48, 50, 53, 55, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 103

Christine Velde

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Migrations i, iii, 65, 111

## **N**

Narrative research 4, 50, 55, 64

## **O**

Occidentalism 7

Orientalism 7, 13

## **P**

Personal development iv, 3, 4, 28, 29, 34, 50, 53, 54, 64, 65, 67, 68, 111

Photography 50, 65, 68, 109

Poetry 10, 43, 50, 61, 62, 104, 105, 111

Post-Colonial Studies 7, 13, 31

## **Q**

Qualitative research iii, 50, 55, 68, 103

Questionnaires 65, 68

## **R**

Refugee 7, 19, 20, 22, 41

Research methods 55, 65, 68, 104

## **S**

Shadow 50, 51, 53, 57, 58, 62

Shanghai iii, iv, vi, 5, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 22, 29, 33, 35, 43, 44, 47, 48, 62, 63, 65, 67, 81, 82, 99, 100, 111

Shock 3, 5, 7, 33, 34, 39, 53, 62, 70, 73, 76, 79, 83, 86, 89, 97, 100, 112

Spirituality 10, 16, 50, 51

## **T**

Tiananmen Square 21, 26, 33, 43, 44, 59, 60, 70, 72, 75, 78, 82, 85, 89, 99

Transformation iv, 3, 4, 7, 19, 21, 29, 33, 51, 52, 60, 102, 111

Transnational 12, 50, 52, 71, 73, 76, 77, 79, 82, 83, 86, 90, 92, 94, 97, 100, 103

## **X**

Xenotropism i, iii, iv, vi, 13, 14, 26, 28, 29, 38, 39, 45, 47, 50, 62, 105