

**Irina Perianova. “A Mashup World”:
Hybrids, Crossovers and Post-Reality.
Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. 319.
ISBN (10) 1-5275-2134-6; ISBN (13) 978-1-5275-2134-6.**

Irina Perianova’s book “*A Mashup World*”: *Hybrids, Crossovers and Post-Reality* is a reading that explores a variety of cross-border forms of self-location. Her monograph is thus synchronous with the enhanced border crossing that has become one of the dominant aspects of the contemporary age, and can certainly be approached as one of the pertinent responses to the production of liminality. Her critical undertaking abounds in terms that form part of an interdisciplinary vocabulary – *mashup* (borrowed from computer science), *hybridity* (from genetic studies), *fusion* (from chemistry, physics and culinary language), or the broadly-applicable term *mixes*. For greater convenience, however, and because her investigation focuses on the ontology of heterogeneous forms, she prefers the terms “hybridity” and “hybrid” to render the idea of cross-over both as regards the origins of the heterogeneous form and when it comes to its composition.

To harness the exploding immensity of hybrid entities, Perianova adopts a holistic approach, which, as Dr Iouri Pankrats, one of the reviewers of the book, suggests, contributes an attractive technique of handling multiplicity (see his comment on the back cover). “Holistic” should certainly refer to the theoretical hybridity that underpins this critical endeavour through the negotiation of as diverse academic domains as postmodernism, postcolonialism, and postrealism. The “post”-ness of these theoretical trends points, in some respects, to the “beyond” of the present day where the previously accumulated forms can be used as a reliable material for regeneration.

Structurally, the monograph consists of an Introduction, seven chapters, conclusion, and a bibliographical section, with each chapter (except for the first one) bound to one particular domain of hybridity. The first chapter is largely theoretical. It has a kaleidoscopic composition as it redirects its theoretical overview to diverse areas of lifestyle such as culinary practices, entertainment, science and art, music, and life at home. This list seems a little chaotic as the multifocal lens of the research operates within several frames of reference at once. It remains unclear whether these activities, in particular, are the ones where hybridity thrives or they have been selected as they are the most representative domains of human life. In fact, all chapters are structured kaleidoscopically, with a more general theoretical introduction that ramifies and multiplies in diverse forms and examples afterwards.

Chapter two studies a multitude of hybrid identities, chapter three considers hybridity in social and political practices with a stress on the role of “creative truth” and alternative facts. Chapter four introduces us to advertising and the media, and discusses some manipulative techniques like generating informational noise, for instance. Modelling information and media manipulation are the major cornerstones of this chapter.

Chapters five and six discuss issues related to mythology and fiction (fantastic fiction, as well); along with linguistic hybridization, and chapter seven focuses on the hybridization processes in education. While this multifaceted presentation of the phenomenon of hybridity is certainly the outcome of Perianova’s own hybrid approach to her subject, I wonder if there is any rationale behind this particular logical order of the chapters. Perhaps the direction of the monograph’s discourse shifts from the more private domain of human life towards its social articulations? While chapters four and five offer a parallel discussion of hybridity and the forms it takes in fiction and non-fiction?

Undoubtedly, Irina Perianova’s monograph contributes to the discussion of such problematic issues as “truth,” “reality,” “fake news,” “alternative facts,” and “post-truth” that have obtained new valences in the contemporary world of excessive border crossing. The holistic approach to these problems itself signals the necessity to rethink the conventional academic division between “sciences” and “humanities.” Still, the concept of hybridity hints at the imminent presence of categories such as “sameness”

and “difference,” “reality” and “post-reality,” and it might be a good idea to think over how such implied binary regimes can be reworked into transitional modes of thinking and action.

Department of English and American Studies
University of Veliko Tarnovo

Petya Tsoneva

CORRESPONDENCE: Assoc. Prof. Petya Tsoneva, PhD, Department of English and American Studies, University of Veliko Tarnovo, 2 Teodosi Tarnovski St., Veliko Tarnovo 5003, Bulgaria. @ p.coneva@ts.uni-vt.bg



Euromed Feminist Initiative, editor. *Citizenship, Gender, and Democracy Building*. 76. Beirut, Euromed Feminist Initiative, 2018. ISBN 978-2-9565916-0-3.

Over the last few decades, gender equality, human rights – women’s rights in particular – and democracy have been among the chief preoccupations of feminist activists and scholars concerned with women’s issues. Admittedly, the problems related to citizenship, gender, and democracy have been more acute in some parts of the world than in others. This volume comprises some of the papers given at the “Citizenship, Gender, and Democracy Building” International Conference, held in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2015. The objectives of the event are specified in the Introduction. One of these objectives – to discuss issues related to “infringements of gender equality and the continuing exclusion of women from public participation on account of their presumed inferiority” (6) – is discussed by most of the volume’s contributors. Some of the contributors are academics from European universities while the rest are social activists.

Hassan Abbas’s article “Citizenship as a Culture First” focuses on gender equality. The author’s starting point is the premise that citizenship is the only framework capable of “enabling different identities, whether natural or acquired, to live together in a reality that guarantees dignity, freedom, and equality for each individual” (7). Further on, he argues that citizenship needs to stop being a mere political concept and should become an ethos if any real equality is to be achieved. Abbas is not overly optimistic about such a prospect and admits that it could be viewed as somewhat “utopian” (10).

Birte Siim and Pauline Stoltz’s article has a wider scope, reflecting on nationalism, as well as on gender and citizenship, in a Scandinavian context. The authors challenge some popular assumptions, arguing that “gendered approaches need to evolve beyond notions premised on family values and motherhood” and that the concept of citizenship needs to be rethought “beyond the nation state” (11).

In her article “Women, Ethnicity, and Citizenship,” Umut Erel aims to take the concept of citizenship – with regard to ethnic minority women – out of the context of the fixed relationship between the individual and the state and bring it into a “wider sociological understanding of belonging and participation” (23). This problem is tackled well by the author, who also examines three different – though related – ways in which minority women challenge normative understandings of citizenship.

In “Male Leaders and Female Caretakers: Gender Dynamics in the Political Life of a South Eastern European Society in Protracted Transition,” Ludmilla Kostova discusses gender dynamics in Bulgarian political life. She states that the gender imbalance in political decision-making bodies is largely due to three factors: the insufficient strength of Bulgarian civil society, the persistence of the notion of “separate spheres,” and the reluctance of many women to participate in the political process. The author illustrates her points by referring to specific political events – the Bulgarian parliamentary election in 2014 and the country’s presidential election in 2016 – and notes that “traditional systems of gender relations have proved very resistant to change in the European south” (28). She makes the observation that while in some north European contexts decisive steps have been taken to oppose and do away with