


 FICTION
STORY-ISH

T.S. MARIN

(Disclaimer: The author earnestly insists that the following is a work of pure "fiction!" Any resemblance to anyone – living or dead – is entirely coincidental. The place, time, and incidents are most probably fictional as well.)

I.
Five years back:

He calculated the distance, the people between them, and kicked the football with perfect precision at her – that haughty one – gliding with her nose in the air – as if she owned the campus! It was a challenge he was more than willing to accept. Boys will be boys, after all!

Present day:

Two droplets of semi-solid wax on her paper-thin skin while playing with a candle. Seeing the nearly non-existent scars, he practically emptied the entire candles section of *Aarong*.

Time changes everything, they say.



PHOTO: AUTHOR

II.
Her: Best kind of relationship?

Him: Probably the one where the whole wide world knows that you are in love even before you do!

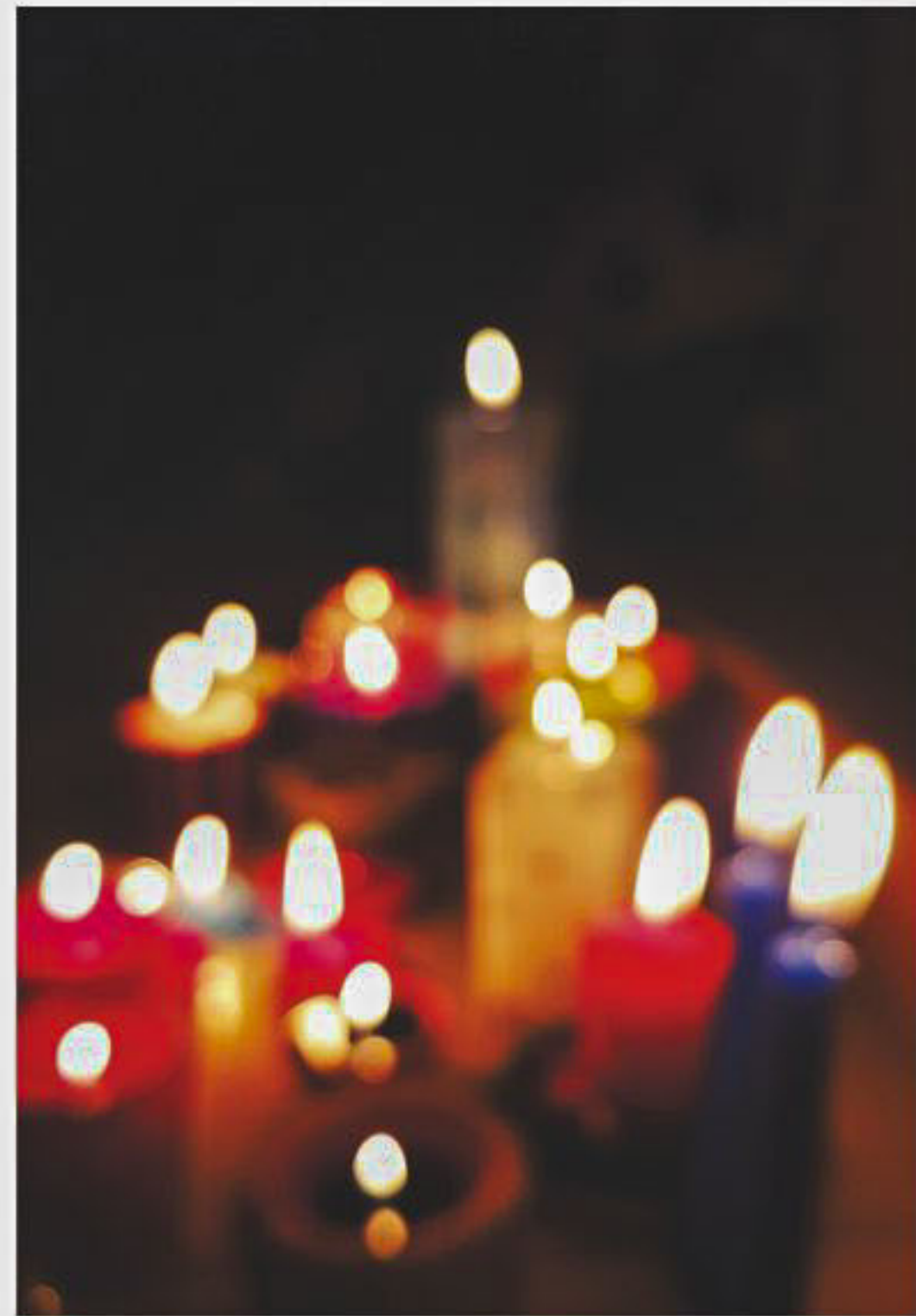


PHOTO: AUTHOR

IV.
Her: When is your flight?

Him: This evening.

Her: *Abhi naa jao chhod kar... ke dil abhi bhaara nahi!*

And right there, under the inky grey, swirling storm-clouds – in the middle of a rainy dusk – stuck in a never-ending Dhaka traffic, the shy girl (who cannot and does not sing even in shower) crooned for the very first time.



PHOTO: AUTHOR



PHOTO: RIAZ MAHMUD BHUIYAN

III.
His laughter is like a supernova. Hers, an ocean. When they smile together, the whole universe pauses for a while.**V.**
Looking at the display, the amateur photographer sighed longingly. Why are these damned cameras so heavy? And then her costume was not very convenient for her endeavours either. But, she did not mind much. The outcomes were worth it!

There he was – the groom – those eyes – those limousine eyelashes...

Someone's call broke the photographer's reverie. Music, lights, flowers, colours, people – everything swam back to her vision. It was time for those *Sabyasaachi*-esque royal bride-and-groom poses, time to stop playing the "photographer" and start being the bride.

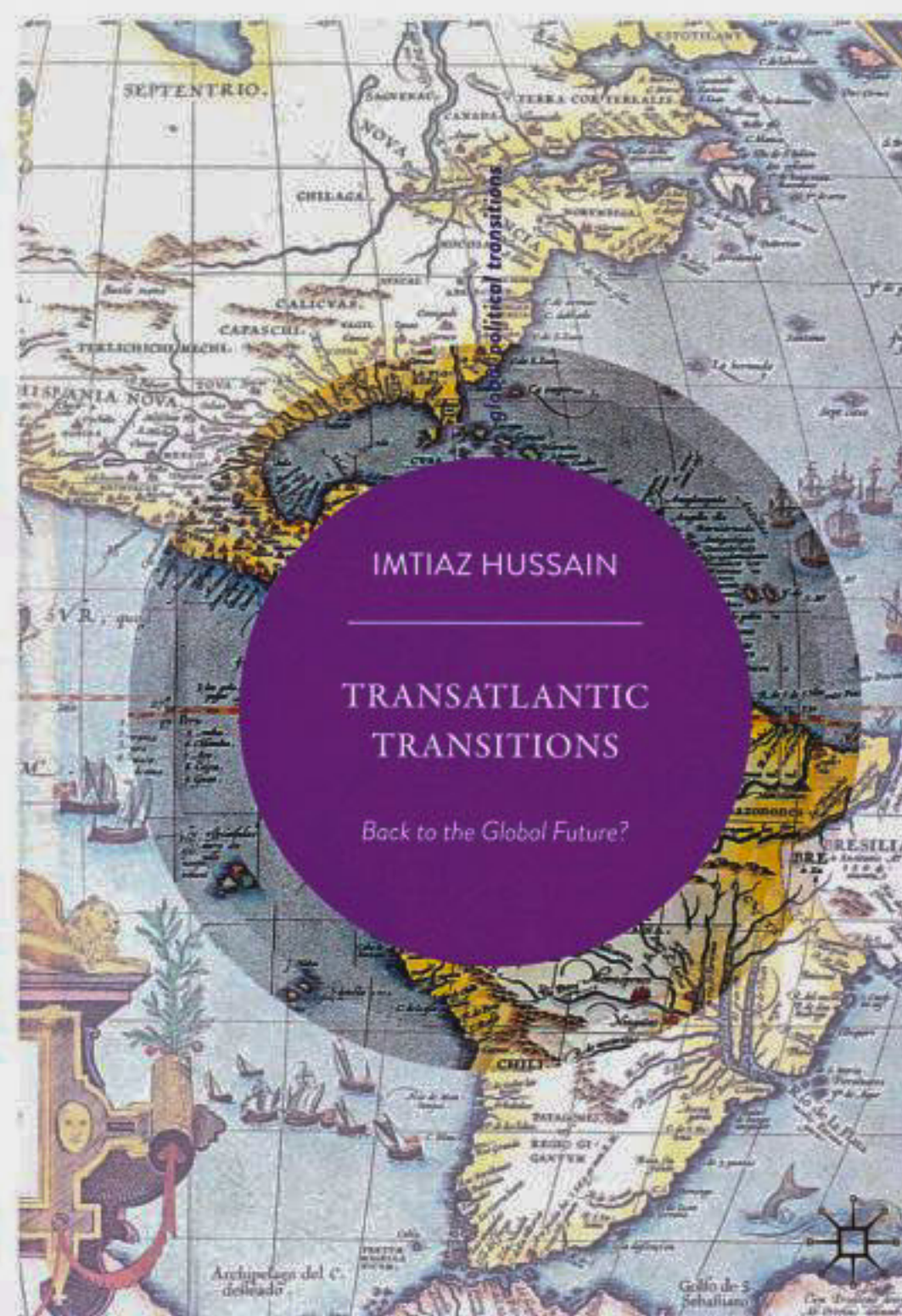
She caught his eyes, and both of them started giggling without any reason. Yeah, some photos are going to look really "formal!"

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Transatlantic Transitions: Back to Global Future?

REVIEWED BY ASM ALI ASHRAF

Imtiaz Hussain, ISBN: 978-9-81106-607-8, Palgrave MacMillan, 2018.



how land discovery and silver mining paved the ways for soldiers, settlers, and slaves to move to Central and South America and why the process of democratization was difficult there. Chapter 3 describes the migratory movements of European colonizers, the African slaves, and the fortune-seekers from other parts of the world, and what role the 'State' played in managing migration. Chapter 4 traces the evolution of a distinct political economy of Central American States and their economic competition with Europe.

Chapter 5 should be of interest to students of comparative regionalism. It not only shows the emergence of regional trading patterns among South American states but also discusses their linkages with the European integration process, where the all-American summits would focus on trade, investment, and debt issues. But together with its European allies, the United States would

also press her southern neighbours for environmental protection, human rights promotion, immigration control, combating the transnational crimes of drug trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism. This was in sharp contrast to the Latin American nations, whose top agenda included economic liberalization, democratization, and socializing with the external world. In contrast to the US and European efforts to cement greater regional ties with the Latin American countries, the author notes that China was maintaining a low profile in public diplomacy, yet Chinese exports to Latin America have been growing rapidly in the past few decades.

Chapter 6 brings forth the integration challenges of Muslim immigrants in Europe and North America. Although Muslims still represent a small fraction of the total population in Euro-Atlantic countries, the issue of restrictive policy toward Muslim immigrants and travellers is more visible in the Western policy discourse. This is largely due to the high profile terrorist attacks allegedly perpetrated by Muslim immigrants who are alienated from the mainstream society and have a strong hatred toward the foreign policy of the West. The author praises Canada's assimilation policy, which in contrast to its U.S. and European counterparts, has produced better results, measured by the absence of any major terrorist attack of social riots by "angry Muslim immigrants."

Chapter 7 reminds the readers that the origin of democracy had a distinct North Atlantic root—the U.S. War of Independence in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789. Yet a sharp difference emerges between the U.S. and the EU approaches to democratization. While the former prefers a top-down approach the latter suggests a bottom-up approach. The American top-down approach is more visible in Afghanistan and Iraq, where forcible regime change has followed installation of interim and transitional governments, and holding of national elections to move toward a constitutional democracy. The EU, by contrast, has used conditionality, dubbed as the Copenhagen Criteria, to promote democratization in the East. These included stable institutions, functioning

market system, capacity to adjust to the goals of the European economic, political, and monetary unions, and understanding EU's capacity to recruit new members.

The concluding chapter talks about the theoretical and policy implications. The competing theories of international relations and their relevance in analysing transatlantic relations are discussed here. For policy makers, the author suggests having a better understanding of how global contexts and local phenomena interact with each other, and how policymaking is a multi-level phenomenon involving national, regional, multilateral, and transnational governance.

While there are no major limits in the book, there are several issues that the author may wish to consider in a revised edition. The first is to include maps in order to supplement textual narratives so that readers can track transitions from one place to the other. The second issue concerns the book's subtitle: '*Back to the Future?*' There is an old saying "A book title with a question mark never gives you the answer to the question." The same is also relevant here. The author could have used a sub-section and concluded the book with a discussion on what he means by going back to future and how he wants the readers to go back to future. Third, although the chapter on immigration securitization touches on radicalization of Muslim immigrants, it offers no explanation for the rise of Islamophobia in the West.

Despite these trivial issues, the book will be an important addition to one's reading list. But an obvious question is, who should read it and why? There is no easy answer since the book is a cocktail of geography, history, international affairs and political science. Those interested in political economy and global governance should also find it a fascinating piece. The strengths of the book lie in its application of rigorous theoretical approaches and rich empirical data. The inclusion of a wide variety of reference materials would also guide anyone interested in transatlantic studies.

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The term 'transatlantic relations' has emerged as a dominant paradigm in the study of relations between Europe and the United States. Two examples in the post-9/11 era validate this. When the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, two major European allies—France and Germany—declined to support the war raising questions about the legitimacy of such actions. The international media largely portrayed this Franco-German move as 'transatlantic rift.' Prior to the 2003 Iraq invasion, many of America's European allies participated in the Afghanistan War to combat terrorism and insurgency; yet they were unwilling to put their soldiers in relatively risky areas citing their preference for development and reconstruction to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. This was labelled as 'transatlantic divergence' in waging the Afghanistan War.

Other usage of the term has long focused on the issue of burden-sharing among members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Whether NATO's European members have contributed enough to military spending and thus maintaining the alliance security has been the principal concern for the US, the de facto leader of NATO. The founding charter of NATO and various strategic documents of the alliance also frequently refer to 'transatlantic solidarity' as a means to project an identity of collective security.

In *Transatlantic Transitions*, Hussain challenges the dominant paradigm and the conventional usage of the term referring primarily to geography and history. He contends that Central and South American countries and their relations with Europe have a long history of gestation since the discovery of America, and therefore these countries should constitute an inevitable part of the transatlantic studies.

This interesting book is split into eight parts—an introduction, six thematic chapters, and a conclusion. The introductory chapter sets off the tone explaining how multiple theoretical perspectives can form a richer narrative of transatlantic relations. The next three chapters offer rich historical accounts of the linkages between Central and South America on the one hand and Europe and the rest of the world on the other. Chapter 2 provides fascinating details of