

## SPECIAL FOCUS

# PLURALISM IN EMERGENC(I)ES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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## Narrative, Resistance and Manus Prison Theory

Omid Tofighian<sup>1</sup>

*University of New South Wales/University of Sydney*

*with*

Behrouz Boochani

*University of New South Wales/University of Canterbury*

### Abstract

*In early 2020 Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian conducted a speaking tour of the United States, Canada, UK, and Europe (including Ireland). They presented at numerous universities, including the University of Cambridge. In their Cambridge talk they focused on the transformative potential of storytelling and the importance of creating new intellectual frameworks for resistance. Key themes and issues in their discussion included features of Manus Prison Theory, analysis of the book No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison, Australia's detention industry, and colonialism. The three parts of this article involve: the context to Boochani's incarceration and the creation and success of his award-winning book; a dialogue between Boochani and Tofighian; and a series of analytical remarks by Tofighian in response to audience questions.*

**Keywords:** Behrouz Boochani, Manus Island, Borders, Exile, Refugees, Literature of Resistance

### Part One: History and Context

**O**n July 23, 2013, asylum seekers travelling by boat to Australia from Indonesia were intercepted in Australian waters by a British tanker and then transferred to an Australian navy ship. Kurdish-Iranian

<sup>1</sup> Section Two of this article consists of an edited dialogue between Behrouz Boochani and the author at the University of Cambridge.

journalist and writer Behrouz Boochani was one of the passengers. It was his second attempt to reach Australia; the first boat he took had sunk in Indonesian waters, killing some passengers. Boochani was subsequently jailed in Indonesia and again engaged people-smugglers for a second journey after escaping. The 23rd of July, the day the boat was picked up by the navy, is also Boochani's birthday.

In a multi-award-winning book *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison*, he expresses the existential angst and perplexity associated with this experience. At the time, he thought that, after being captured by the navy, he now would be safe and free and granted protection by the Australian government.

*Death is death/  
Plain and simple/  
Absurd and sudden /  
Exactly like birth.*

I realize later that the stormy night when the angel of death perched on my shoulders was the night of my nativity; both my birthday and the moment of my rebirth. I realize this only once I set foot on dry land. If I had died, it would have been a fascinating and ridiculous death. Just think about it, a person who dies right on the same day that they were born. This is worthless, the fact that I now want to interpret a counterfactual occurrence; that is, reflect deeply on something that might have occurred in the past – but in fact didn't. Maybe if I had died someone would have come along and philosophically analyzed my death using fortune-telling techniques or the movements of the celestial bodies and spheres. On my birthday they would have offered this to many others to digest. Perhaps on my birthday my mother would have constructed mythologies about her son to honor his death; with these sacred and mystifying fantasies she could cope better with her grief. She would spin sacred and wondrous webs around the circumstances. She would associate my death with metaphysical entities and occurrences. But all these sacred mourning rituals wouldn't change a thing.

*Death is death.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Behrouz Boochani, *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison*, trans. Omid Tofighian (Sydney: Picador, 2018), 75–76.

Australia is a signatory to the Refugee Convention, and Boochani was exercising his right under international law. However, on July 19, 2013, just four days before his boat arrived, former Labor Party Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had announced that from that day forward, anyone arriving in Australia to seek asylum by boat would be sent offshore and barred from Australia.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, following his rescue, Behrouz was imprisoned on Christmas Island (an Australian territory) for approximately one month and then exiled to Manus Island in Papua New Guinea (PNG), a former colony of Australia and the site of one of the notorious offshore immigration detention centers, Manus Island for men traveling alone.<sup>4</sup> He spent over six years in indefinite detention there before being transferred to and detained in the capital city of PNG, Port Moresby in 2019. Following a period of being locked up in the capital, he managed to escape to New Zealand where he applied for asylum in November 2019. In 2020, on the same day as his arrival in Australian waters and also his birthday – July 23rd – Behrouz was accepted as a refugee by New Zealand immigration authorities. The journey took exactly seven years.<sup>5</sup>

On that same day, while I was writing this introduction in Sydney, I received a phone call from Behrouz in Christchurch, New Zealand. After he escaped from PNG for New Zealand in 2019, we continued to communicate and collaborate through WhatsApp. He called to tell me the news – he was officially allowed to remain in New Zealand and could also begin to build his life. However, fully celebrating his birthday and freedom has not yet been possible. Large numbers of refugees are still locked up in Australia's detention industry; many are still in limbo in Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Christmas Island, and on the Australia mainland.

Over the first four-and-a-half years of his incarceration, Boochani wrote his book on a smuggled mobile phone by WhatsApp. *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison* was first published in 2018 to critical acclaim and international recognition.<sup>6</sup> Since that time Boochani and I, as his English translator and collaborator, have been involved in over 200

<sup>3</sup> ABC News, "Asylum seekers arriving in Australia by Boat to be Resettled in Papua New Guinea," 2013, July 19, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-19/manus-island-detention-centre-to-be-expanded-under-rudd27s-asy/4830778>.

<sup>4</sup> The Republic of Nauru, a former protectorate, is for women, unaccompanied minors, and families.

<sup>5</sup> Megan K. Stack, "Behrouz Boochani Just Wants to Be Free," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/magazine/behrouz-boochani-australia.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeff Sparrow, "A Place of Punishment: No Friend But the Mountains by Behrouz Boochani," *Sydney Review of Books*, September 21, 2018, <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/review/a-place-of-punishment-no-friend-but-the-mountains-by-behrouz-boochani/>; Anne McNevin, "What we owe to the refugees on Manus," *Inside Story*, January 30, 2019, <https://insidestory.org.au/what-we-owe-to-the-refugees-on-manus/>.

international and Australian events and activities in collaboration mainly with literature festivals and universities. Also, his book has won the Victorian Prize for Literature, in addition to the Victorian Premier's Award for Non-Fiction, both at the 2019 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.<sup>7</sup> The book also won the Special Award at the 2019 New South Wale (NSW) Premier's Literary Awards; Non-Fiction Book of the Year at the 2019 Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA); the 2019 National Biography Prize; winner for ABIA Audiobook of the year 2020; and in North America the book was awarded the Foreword Indies Choice Prize for Non-Fiction. In fact, Boochani managed to leave PNG for New Zealand partly due to the international success of his book; fleeing PNG involved a complex and high-risk plan to take up an invitation to speak at the 2019 WORD Christchurch Festival in New Zealand.

At the beginning of 2016, I came across an article in *The Guardian* written by Boochani and translated by his first translator, Moones Mansoubi.<sup>8</sup> I immediately contacted Boochani through Facebook, and we soon moved to WhatsApp. After agreeing to translate his journalism he asked me to translate his book from Persian into English. At the time he had completed 30 percent of the manuscript, all of it written by WhatsApp text messages and arranged into PDFs by Mansoubi per Boochani's instructions (except for the whole final chapter which was sent to me directly through WhatsApp). I started the translation and editing of the book in December 2016 while the majority of the text was still being written.<sup>9</sup>

Mansoubi assisted me as a consultant for my translation of the book (Sajad Kabgani also assisted in this role). The translation process coincided with writing the middle and late chapters; however, Boochani continued to report from inside the detention center all through this period.<sup>10</sup> During

manus/; J.M. Coetzee, "Australia's Shame," *The New York Review of Books*, October 26, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2019/09/26/australias-shame/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Wheeler Centre, "Behrouz Boochani Wins the 2019 Victorian Prize for Literature," January 31, 2019, <https://www.wheelercentre.com/news/behrouz-boochani-wins-the-2019-victorian-prize-for-literature>; Richard Cooke, "Australia's Most Important Writer Isn't Allowed Into the Country," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/08/opinion/australia-behrouz-boochani-victorian-prize.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Moones Mansoubi, "Translating Manus and Nauru: Refugee Writing," *ArtsEverywhere*, July 9, 2020, <https://artseverywhere.ca/2020/07/09/manus-nauru/>.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the simultaneous writing and translating see Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, "The Last Days in Manus Prison," *Meanjin*, 77.4 (2018): 32–45, <https://meanjin.com.au/essays/the-last-days-in-manus-prison/>.

<sup>10</sup> Translator's note, Omid Tofighian, "Writing from Manus Prison: A Scathing Critique of Domination and Oppression," *The Guardian*, 2018, July 31, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/31/writing-from-manus-prison-a-scathing-critique-of-domination-and-oppression>; Omid Tofighian, "Truth

this time I was also translating his journalism, making subtitles for his film *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (2017, co-directed with Arash Kamali Sarvestani)<sup>11</sup> and collaborating with him on social media posts and other forms of resistance.<sup>12</sup>

On February 7th, Behrouz Boochani and I co-presented at the University of Cambridge.<sup>13</sup> The next two sections of this article expand upon my interactions with Boochani and the Cambridge audience from the seminar, providing insight into the central themes and concerns of Manus Prison Theory.<sup>14</sup> I also explore important aspects of Boochani's book, my role as translator and co-creator, and issues such as the border-industrial complex, literature as resistance, colonial violence, and knowledge produced while in exile and incarcerated.<sup>15</sup>

## Part Two: Manus Prison Theory as a Shared Philosophical Activity<sup>16</sup>

**Behrouz:** The situation is very complex and has philosophical, historical, and political dimensions. Therefore, when you write from circumstances like these here in Manus Prison, it is inevitable that your work takes on

to Power: My Time Translating Behrouz Boochani's Masterpiece," *The Conversation*, 2018, August 15, <https://theconversation.com/truth-to-power-my-time-translating-behrouz-boochanis-masterpiece-101589>.

<sup>11</sup> Behrouz Boochani, "Film as Folklore," trans Omid Tofighian, *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18 (2019): 185–87; Omid Tofighian, "Chauka Calls – A Photo Essay," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18 (2019); Omid Tofighian, "Displacement, Exile and Incarceration Commuted into Cinematic Vision," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18 (2019): 91–106; Janet Galbraith, "A Reflection on Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18 (2019): 193–98; A. Kamali Sarvestani, "Searching for Chauka," trans. Omid Tofighian, *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 18 (2019); Jeremy Elphick, "Cinematic Poetics and Reclaiming History: Chauka, Please Tell us the Time as Legacy," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 18 (2019): 199–204.

<sup>12</sup> Arianna Grasso, "Rewriting the Refugee Identity in Alter/Native Spaces: Behrouz Boochani on Twitter," *Journal of the European Association for Studies of Australia* 10.2 (2019): 22–35.

<sup>13</sup> Boochani appeared via video link from New Zealand and me in person. The talk was titled "Manus Prison Theory: Displacement, Exile and Knowing in Indefinite Detention"; it was organized by the Risk and Renewal in the Pacific Research Network, funded by the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) – convened by Tom Powell Davies and Dylan Gaffney.

<sup>14</sup> Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, "Manus Prison Theory: Borders, Incarceration and Collective Agency," *Griffith Review* 65, ed. A. Hay (2019a); Omid Tofighian, "Introducing Manus Prison Theory: Knowing Border Violence," *Globalizations* 17.7 (2020): 1138–56, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2020.1713547>. Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, "No Friend but the Mountains and Manus Prison Theory: In Conversation," *Borderlands* 19.1 (2020): 8–26, doi:10.21307/borderlands-2020-002; Behrouz Boochani, "Manus Prison Theory," trans. Omid Tofighian," *The Saturday Paper*, 11–17, 2018 August, <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/topic/2018/08/11/manus-prisontheory/15339096006690>.

<sup>15</sup> Omid Tofighian, "Translator's Tale: A Window to the Mountains," in *No Friend but the Mountains*, xi–xxxiv and "No Friend but the Mountains: Translator's Reflections," in *No Friend but the Mountains*, 359–74.

<sup>16</sup> I am grateful to Alexandra Hall for her transcription work and editing references and bibliography.

different layers. What I did in Manus Island involved engaging with and incorporating Kurdish resistance and political thought. I drew on the culture of resistance and Kurdish cultural elements in order to stand up in front of this system in particular, and the Australian system in general. I think the book, the film, and other works are productions based on this exceptional context. It is a very exceptional context, and the different levels and layers deserve discussion. What I always try to do is create my own language to represent this situation, to challenge the system. So this language is not only words; I also use musical elements, and I create new concepts. For example, Australia calls that place an “offshore processing center” but I tried to create my own concept, which is “prison” – because it is like a prison. I use terms like “exile policy” and “systematic torture,” and other terms. What is important and necessary to understand about these words is that they help think about this exile policy in relation to a colonial system and a colonial mentality. That is why these words are not only about refugees; they are also about the local Indigenous population on Manus, people who are victims under this exile policy. So Indigenous people in this context are forgotten people – the media or the public do not talk about them. In these works the Indigenous people are the main part in addition to the Kurdish people and their history of resistance in Kurdistan. The whole story reflects the exceptional nature of this policy and the way the system has been established on colonialism. And this relates to the history of colonialism in Australia and the country’s colonial mentality.

**Omid:** One of the important aspects of your work and your political and creative vision is the way you use paradox, juxtaposition, contradiction, and satire; you use absurdity to present and reflect on the situation, and you use these even when you self-analyze. I think this has a lot to do with the surrealist style of your work – I refer to it in my translator’s note as “horrific surrealism.” There are a number of things you have discussed that I want to expand on. One of them is how Manus Prison is a state of exception; you talk about it as a state of exception, and you are particularly influenced by theorists like Agamben. But at the same time you say that Manus Prison is not exceptional; you say it is part of Australia, part of the history of Australia. We need to explore how something can be both exceptional and non-exceptional at the same time. To help understand this maybe you could unpack the ways Manus Prison characterizes Australian institutions and culture.

**Behrouz:** When I say exceptional I refer specifically to what Agamben says, and I am also thinking about the Australian constitution and how they forget

about the law in Australia and say they are doing this because of national security. They justify their actions this way. This is why we cannot even reach the court system in Australia because they already introduced this exile policy based on national security. Quite simply, they say that we do this, we exile people, torture people there, keep people there, and that you should forget about human rights, the law, and the constitution. They say they have the right to do this because of national security; so when I say exceptional I mean exactly this. On the other side, if you look at the whole story, it is very simple. There is a big island which is Australia and a very tiny island which is Manus – they exiled people there and design a system to torture them and destroy them. But after 6 years, after 5 years, after 4 years the people exiled on the island pushed Australia back and created a huge challenge against this system. I know this is a big claim but people should go and read the history of our resistance in Manus Island and the way we resisted in front of the system; that is, the language that we used to survive. And I also mean our bodies, how we used our bodies. I think all of this produced knowledge. Some people think that there are just some refugees there but if you research and look at the six years of resistance against this system you will notice that it is a huge body of work and a huge history of resistance. On the other side, Manus Island is a part of Australia, it is a part of Australian political culture, and in fact Australia practices political dictatorship in Manus Island and Nauru. It practices dictatorship on those islands; that is why I think both Manus Island and the island of Australia impact on each other. Sometimes Manus Island is the whole and Australia is a part of Manus Island, and sometimes Australia is the whole and Manus is part of it. So these two islands impact on each other, and it will take time for Australian people to understand how this exile policy negatively impacts their country. Now we can see how they are treating Australian citizens like they have been treating the refugees. We should look at the history of this mentality; the mentality that creates this kind of violence and barbarity. Manus has roots in the history of Australia and the way the colonists treated the Indigenous people, something which continues until today. Australia ignores them, denies them, and tries to destroy them. When I say Australia destroys them, I am talking about many things that happened in the history of Australia, also in cultural ways: I mean, they destroyed the Indigenous cultural elements. This is the whole story according to my understanding, and I can give many examples that occurred over the last couple of years. So this dictatorship that was practiced in Manus Island is now spreading and expanding to other parts of Australian society. It has had an impact on the



political culture in Australia. The most recent example is the way the Australian government is treating the Australian citizens returning from China amidst the Coronavirus pandemic. They are suspicious that they may have that virus, and they exiled them to Christmas Island and kept them there. It is very interesting how exporting violence and exporting the issues to islands is a part of Australia's mentality. It is possible that if they continue in this way in the near future, they will start deporting citizens who are, for example, environmental activists and treat them in the way they have been treating the refugees. Or anyone who opposes this system, it is possible. . . why not? There is no guarantee for democracy. Another example is the way the Australian authorities attacked the ABC offices and confiscated information from there and took their computers. Consider the way they treated the Australian journalists at that time. All these things are new in Australia, and they happened suddenly. There are many stories like this.

**Omid:** What I appreciate about your analysis is the way you discuss law and how the root of violence, or the possibility for lawlessness, is embedded in the construction and formulation of the law. So this issue about national security enables, and even encourages, a state to break the law it is tied up with, this issue of national security also factors in the Refugee Convention. This becomes a factor in the way laws are applied. I think to understand the absurdity, the complexity, and the contradictions in all of this we need to go beyond scholarly analysis, journalism, and legal interpretations and move towards narrative in order to realize how this affects peoples' lives on an everyday basis, the way it strips people of their identity. I think one of the things you do with narrative is that you allow all these multidimensional elements to appear, you allow for an appreciation of different voices, you let different people engage in conversation; this happens as a result of presenting stories.

**Behrouz:** I think this does not only relate to my work; when I talk about Manus Island and Nauru, I think we should talk about communities and people. That is, the whole story of our resistance. I think about those people who died – those people who were killed – by the hands of this system. I look at it in this way, the whole story, all the resistance, and my works are a part of that. All examples of resistance challenge this system, challenge this mentality. But unfortunately in Australia people just stand back and do not recognize this. . . this challenge needs to be understood. I think history will judge this part of Australian history; history will judge how this policy has impacted people. It is the whole story. Even trying to



imagine all this is very surreal and sometimes I think the perspective of refugees in Manus Island – the way Manus Island understands the island of Australia – is deeper because we have been looking at Australia from that island for years and years. But they only sometimes look at us, not every day. But we were looking at Australia every day. I think that is a surreal picture – not even every day, every moment.

**Omid:** I think another significant factor that comes through in your narrative approach – your use of literature as resistance – is how you want to replace the construct or the image of the refugee that exists right across the political spectrum. The view that refugees are weak, needy, vulnerable, tragic victims, supplicants, you want to replace that with something else. What you said about the perspective, the knowledge, the understanding, the standpoint of refugees is significant here because you emphasize that they are not just people suffering under this system but are also people who are producing knowledge from their unique position. So, in this case the refugees are the more enlightened when it comes to understanding state violence and in fact Australian settlers are the victims; they are the prisoners in some respects.

**Behrouz:** You are right, I think about how the Australian people are victims under this system in some ways. Australian citizens working in Manus Prison for years are victims under this system, and as a result of this mentality because they have been traumatized, they witnessed so much violence and were like hostages of the system; they get paid well but at the same time could not put up with those harsh circumstances. They were challenging themselves, and now many of them have been seriously traumatized. They also take that violence with themselves to Australia; those people are now living in Australia and have been following this story for years and years and as a result are traumatized. In fact, I think this exile policy has traumatized a big part of Australia and in time people will understand this more and how this policy has damaged Australia in different ways.

Look at it in this way, the refugees are victims under the law in these circumstances. They are out of law, and on the other hand they are victims of the law. Australia does all of this under the law and justifies it using the law, and on the other hand the refugees are not citizens and so they cannot have access to law, cannot have access to the courts. This is remarkable, it's crazy, and I do not know what to say. Look at the whole picture: some people come to your country and seek asylum under the international convention and you take them randomly and exile them by force to a remote island without processing them, then you keep them

there for years and years and force them to live there forever. Even when some people accept to live there you do not settle them – just a few people accepted to live on that island forever but they did not settle them. Also, a country like New Zealand offered to take those people and Australia said “No.” And then when someone dies, Australia says it is not my responsibility – this is Papua New Guinea’s responsibility. It is really exceptional, if you look at this story from every angle, it is unbelievable; you do not let these people come to your country and you exile them, you keep them in prison and when someone dies, you say it is not my responsibility and you should talk to Papua New Guinea (PNG). Then a country like New Zealand offers to take them, and Australia says “No.” It is unbelievable, we are facing a classical colonial system which humiliates a country like Papua New Guinea and uses this country for its political benefit, for political gain. And they have continued this policy, they still justify this and a big part of the society accepts this policy. We can discuss the different layers of this policy, and there are many stories about it. I am just talking about the big picture. But when we focus on the details we find many exceptional stories

**Omid:** You have been providing this kind of information, new ways of analyzing, introducing us to new frameworks and methods for understanding what is happening there. This is a neo-colonial experiment taking place so it is necessary to continue this resistance because it is not just about people locked up on Manus Island but is a global phenomenon, it is a global form of violence, which, as you pointed out, is being exported.

**Behrouz:** I would like you to talk about the characters in the book more, like Maysam the Whore and even Chauka, the bird.<sup>17</sup> When we talk about Manus people, forget about the characters, but each of them are representative of a main part of this story and this prison system. Like Maysam the Whore, who is this person, and what is Maysam’s role? What is the role of the Hero, the Prophet, the Prime Minister, with all these characters I tried to create them in a way that represents a group of men detained there. But there is also Old Man Generator and other non-human characters.

**Omid:** It would also be useful to explore the surreal element more, and especially how it informs the different aspects of our work. One point in

<sup>17</sup> In *No Friend but the Mountains* all characters are given titles or epithets that represent their essential qualities and personal features. This act of naming is also a way of reclaiming identity for the imprisoned refugees who are reduced to numbers in the system; it is a way to make the people beautiful, unique and powerful.

relation to the surrealism we mention is the fact that I am able to travel, I am able to cross borders, and I have the privilege of engaging with people at the over 150 events that we have been involved in – and also everything else that goes along with the events. But all this time you have been confined, you have not enjoyed freedom of movement like me, you cannot plan your future in any way, and you are not sure what your status is going to be in New Zealand, so I think this is indicative of the surreal nature of our relationship with each other. Then again these opportunities have created new platforms and approaches for developing Manus Prison Theory; this is really what it is about, it is an open-ended project, what we call a shared philosophical activity. It began with our collaboration but continues with everyone else we engage with.

Focusing on the characters and the individual stories is vital, and it may be important to introduce some context to the different communities locked up there first. The largest groups in Manus Prison are people from places such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Kurdistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and Somalia, and it is important to explain that these people are fleeing countries that have been directly affected by Australia's foreign policies. For instance, Afghanistan and Iraq are clear examples. Australia's participation in the invasion of these two countries has led to more people fleeing. This also relates to people coming from Pakistan because many people cross the border into Pakistan first and then seek asylum in Australia. Also, Australia has been involved in enforcing the strict international sanctions on Iran, it even applies autonomous sanctions on the country. These policies actually empower the government in Iran to persecute its people, in particular marginalized groups.

And this is one of the other dimensions of the book; we have talked about a few of the different layers, and one of them is the transnational and transhistorical dimension. To continue this discussion, we have a situation where the United States and European countries are looking at Australia as a model, as a success story in terms of externalizing borders. I remember Donald Trump talking to the former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, saying "That is a good idea. We should do that too. You are worse than I am."

Denmark has created an island where it imprisons refugees. In fact, it is an island where they once conducted experiments on animals, too. The ferry that takes people there is called "Virus." In addition to challenging the material conditions, this example illustrates the importance of challenging the epistemic, the symbolic aesthetic, the cultural dimensions to this as remarkably horrific and surreal.

The externalization of borders is also practiced by the EU in places like Libya and Sudan. There are a significant number of people from Sudan still held in Port Moresby (PNG), or who have been transferred to Australia for medical support but are locked up in motels. It is important to recognize how the EU has been providing funding to the Sudanese government for building and managing camps there for people from different parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Something I was introduced to by Sudanese people in Manus Prison who were keenly following the debates and the developments in their home country was how the Sudanese government was using EU money to persecute their own people. Recently I came across studies detailing how the same technologies used to maintain the camps funded by the EU were then used against protestors in Sudan. So, there is a really disturbing fusion, or interconnection, between humanitarianism and militarism; state oppression and Western support networks work together in order to create conditions where people find it impossible to live. One can find these examples everywhere; consider, multinational companies in Manus and Nauru. Those companies operate globally and function within Australia in significant ways. For instance, Wilson Security was part of Australia's offshore border regime and also provides monitoring and surveillance in some Australian universities. There are really ugly interconnections between capital, government policies, and oppressive technologies. Australia is now thinking of privatizing visa processing. If one follows the paper trail, follows the money, it is not difficult to find who is benefiting from these sorts of sites, and understand why they still exist and why they are expanding.

When people arrive and request protection from Australia and are then exiled to Manus Island the persecution and trauma is compounded. Then being put in that particular situation, having to see the same people day in and day out, having to perform in particular ways demanded by authorities and follow certain rules, having no control over their lives, and then find themselves pitted against each other as a result of the way the rules and regulations are designed. This creates a very peculiar and perverse set of circumstances and incites hatred among the people in there. So, you already have people with backgrounds affected by war, persecution, and different kinds of intervention from the outside, in addition to the problems associated with internal politics. This is then compounded by the experience during the journey for safety, followed by Australia's treatment of people seeking asylum. And then as a result of being confined to this horrible space a whole new set of problems emerges; new forms of violence are replicated. One of the key features of

Manus Prison Theory is about how the system is characterized by domination, oppression, and submission (grinding people down until they give in), but also about multiplication, replication. Therefore, people who are pitted against each other and already influenced by cultural, political, and historical issues find that tensions are multiplied and amplified in the detention center. They were forced into new situations where they engage in other ways of persecuting each other as a result of that particular laboratory-style environment. I think the multiplication and replication of violence in new forms is an important feature; this also relates to what you were saying about the impact on Australian society and institutions. The analysis we engage in is intersectional where issues such as race are analyzed as interlocking with disability, class, sexuality, and religious-based discrimination. All forms of violence are interconnected in new ways within this secluded or remote prison. In addition, in 2016 the PNG Supreme Court ruled that the detention center was illegal and unconstitutional and the doors were unlocked for the first time and refugees could leave for periods of time. After interaction with Manusian people and some limited access to Manusian society new situations were created with their own difficulties, with their own kind of oppressive technologies. I think the stories or narratives that you present really exemplify and illuminate the issues associated with intersectional violence in all their complexity. Again, a scholarly analysis is always going to fall short; the narratives are where the multiple voices and multiple experiences can be foregrounded.

I also want to emphasize the lack of explanatory frameworks for not only understanding the situation, but also people's personal experiences and the book as a literary work. One of the things I grappled with as translator and editor was how to describe it – I call it an anti-genre because I could not find any place to situate it. Categories like auto-fiction or autobiographical novel do not work on their own, and even the categories available for explaining what role the characters have, why and how they function the way they do, and how situations emerge and develop, did not seem to work here. Approaching these elements in the book using a very specific kind of academic bordering – associated with disciplines, theories, and schools of thought – falls apart when engaging with this book, and we need a new kind of creative, intellectual, and cultural framework. So, I introduce notions such as horrific surrealism and anti-genre, which are maybe more heuristic. The lack of explanatory framework is important to recognize here and also relates to your identity as a writer in prison. Even though you had this ability to analyze and express yourself due to your background as a journalist, writer, and academic – also as a Kurdish man

deeply connected to cultural heritage and advocacy – you also wrote for survival. In this case your skills may have put more extreme pressures on you because you had to do that in order to maintain your identity and sanity. But this was also a double-edged sword because writing also made you a target. There were times when guards and other staff would congratulate you for your publications and show some respect, but at the same time you experienced other forms of systemic persecution or marginalization (harassment and exclusion) that will never be described in any reports, accounts, or articles. Here categories, explanations, and analysis fail when trying to find the finer details associated with oppression.

The character of the Prime Minister helps illustrate this. He is someone who came from a high socio-economic standing back in his home country and was a respected and admired figure in the detention center. As a result of a series of events he was totally humiliated, he completely lost face and requested to be sent to another part of the prison to be away from the people who were witness to his humiliation and following that he accepted deportation. This is really important to interpret critically because there exists the principle of non-refoulement – no state that has signed the Refugee Convention or the Protocol has the right to deport someone fleeing danger. Even states who have not signed them are expected to abide by this principle. The Prime Minister accepted to return after years of violence in the prison, years of humiliation, which all culminated in that final incident. It would be misleading to think about that last situation as the only problem that he faced, it was just the tipping point for him. But also consider the response by the guard when another detainee asked about the Prime Minister; the guard smiled and said that he wanted to return to his daughters. In fact, his daughters were in danger. Here we have a situation and lived experience that may be impenetrable to academic study or legal interpretations, or even analysis by journalists. What that man endured to then agree to return home, and what he faces when he returns home, all raise particular questions and concerns which encourage new thinking about these situations. The formal definitions and categories may be too detached and cannot represent what is happening accurately.

### **Part Three: Building on Manus Prison Theory and Exposing Colonial Legacies**

**Omid Tofighian**

As soon as Behrouz was exiled to Manus Prison, he identified it as a colonial system, immediately. He had lived in that kind of system his whole life in

Iran. In fact, his people have been facing that system for generations, for centuries. Being part of Kurdish resistance, being part of Kurdish culture, having pride in who he is, his identity, and understanding his positionality in a place like Iran, growing up in Kurdistan, he was prepared for interpreting, analyzing, critiquing, and resisting this particular colonial environment.<sup>18</sup> So as soon as he was exiled to Manus Island, he saw the way the system was treating the Indigenous people there; he saw the attitudes, behaviors, and mentality of the Australian and New Zealander guards. In addition to his interaction with immigration authorities, these all reflected a particular kind of colonial strategy, a colonial logic. It is important to detail this and analyze it further; the colonial logic involves the settler as the moral center, Indigenous genocide or erasure of Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, which is associated with the exploitation of bodies, and a kind of Orientalism which is deeply influential on the way the borders of Western nations are constructed, and the terms and conditions under which people are able to move.<sup>19</sup> Behrouz identified these features because he had already witnessed something very similar before he was exiled there. It is part of his heritage, it is part of the Kurdish experience in Iran, so after six and a half years in that system, his reading was reinforced. In this sense the multilayered character of the book also involves commentary about Kurdistan. The book is about his

<sup>18</sup> Omid Tofighian, "Behrouz Boochani and the Manus Prison Narratives: Merging Translation with Philosophical Reading," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32.3 (2018): 532–40.

Omid Tofighian, "No Friend but the Mountains: Translator's Reflections," in *No Friend but the Mountains*, 359–74.

<sup>19</sup> Omid Tofighian, "Sanctions, Refugees and the Marginalised: Iran Uprisings are Australia's Concern Too," *ABC News*, 2018, January 6, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-06/iran-uprising-australianmanusisland-political-refugees-islamic/9305756>; Omid Tofighian, "Black Bodies for Political Profit: Sudanese and Somali Standpoints on Australia's Racialized Border Regime," *Transition*, 126 (2018): 5–18, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.126.1.02>; Mohamed Adam, "Betrayal. A Prison Under Siege," *Transition*, 126 (2018): 19–24, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.126.1.03?seq=1>; Hass Hassaballa, "Time, Torture . . . and Tomorrow / Artist's Statement," *Transition* 126 (2018): 31–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.126.1.05>; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.126.1.05?seq=1>; Hani Abdile, "My Mother Tongue / Untitled / Home Far From Home," *Transition*, 126 (2018): 25–30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/transition.126.1.04>; Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, "'A Human Being Feels They are on a Precipice': COVID-19's Threshold Moment," UNSW Sydney Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, June 16, 2020, <https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/%E2%80%9898-human-being-feels-they-are-precipice%E2%80%99-covid-19%E2%80%99s-threshold-moment>; Behrouz Boochani, "The Boats are Coming' is One of the Greatest Lies Told to the Australian People," *The Guardian*, July 1, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/02/the-boats-are-coming-is-one-of-the-greatest-lies-told-to-the-australian-people>; Behrouz Boochani, "The Paladin Scandal is Only a Drop in the Ocean of Corruption on Manus and Nauru," *The Guardian*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/27/the-paladin-scandal-is-only-a-drop-in-the-ocean-of-corruption-on-manus-and-nauru>.



experience and the experiences of others in Manus Prison, but it is also about Kurdistan. You could read the book from a Kurdish perspective, or using a Kurdish interpretation and approaches that focus on the way Kurdish literature, history, and politics have influenced his vision and writing. You could also read it as a book mainly about Manus Prison and Australia's colonial domination there; you could also read it as a book about Australia and its relationship with incarceration.<sup>20</sup> You could even read it as a book about one person's personal experience. And this is what is really powerful about the book, it has these multi-layers. But if we take a longer view, a much broader perspective, it is a book about colonial violence; it is a book about colonial oppression in general. Anyone who has experienced that kind of situation, those kinds of circumstances, those kinds of power relations, will be able to see themselves and their own experience there.

For the first few months, after the book was released the level of interest I think was relatively low. While we were working on this project, in fact, we thought it would probably take a generation until his work was appreciated, and we would see a really powerful response. So we did not have very high expectations. We were judging that based on the reaction to his years of writing journalism and also his film, *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time*. After *Chauka* had its world premiere at the Sydney Film Festival, and had its international premiere at the BFI London Film Festival, and after a number of well-attended screenings in different locations, there was very little interest in it. It is on Vimeo and for the first few months, six months, seven months, there were maybe less than fifty views. Thus, our expectations for the book were not particularly high. We knew how important it was, how significant it was, but we thought it would take maybe a generation for it to attract serious attention. For the first few months there was not a massive response, but all of that changed once he

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Tazreiter, "Suffering and its Depiction through Visual Culture: How Refugees are Turned into Enemies and Figures of Hatred – The Australian Case," in *Refugee Routes*, eds. Vanessa Agnew and Kader Konuk (Berlin: Transcript Verlag, 2019); Claudia Tazreiter, "The Emotional Confluence of Borders, Refugees and Visual Culture: The Case of Behrouz Boochani, Held in Australia's Offshore Detention Regime," *Critical Criminology* (2020): 1–15; Willa McDonald, "A Call to Action: Behrouz Boochani's Manus Island Prison Narratives," in *Still Here: Memoirs of Trauma, Illness and Loss*, eds. Bunty Avieson, Fiona Giles, and Sue Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2019), 238–54; Gilian Whitlock, "The Diary of a Disaster: Behrouz Boochani's 'Asylum in Space,'" *The European Journal of Life Writing*, 7 (2018): 176–82; Brigitta Olubas, "We Forgot Our Names," *Public Books*, 2019, <https://www.publicbooks.org/we-forgotour-names/>; Brigitta Olubas, "'Where We Are Is Too Hard': Refugee Writing and the Australian Border as Literary Interface," *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, 19.2 (2019): 1–15, <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/JASAL/article/view/13455>.

won the Victorian Prize for Literature;<sup>21</sup> that just launched us into a whole new sphere, something really special happened at that moment and we are really grateful to the Wheeler Centre, who selected the judges for that prize (the state government was not judging it). The Wheeler Centre was assigned to judge all of the books that were candidates for different prizes<sup>22</sup> After that, more awards started coming in. And then all the international attention began, and the reviews have all been extraordinarily positive. However, I think that it will take time to grasp all of these different layers, all of these different dimensions that I was talking about.

As translator and collaborator of Behrouz, and supporter of other imprisoned refugees, it is difficult to move beyond the political and urgent socio-economic and health concerns; it is hard to step back and explore different and multidisciplinary interpretations and incorporate new perspectives. Boochani and I realize that closure on many issues and themes will only be possible when everyone is free, the prison camps have been closed, and the Australian government is held accountable for the deaths and damage to people's lives. Because the situation is ongoing – the oppression of people in Port Moresby (PNG) and in Nauru, in Australian-run detention facilities in Indonesia, and in detention centers across Australia – maybe the conditions are not right in order to make a fair evaluation of the impact of this book on the Australian public and literary culture.

However, there is a need, for instance, to examine how and why Behrouz uses humour in the book; he uses a lot of satire, and this has not been grasped by everyone. Very few people have noticed his use of humour or the different philosophical dimensions. So there is a lot of emphasis on certain elements over others; all the other layers of the book have not really been explored in detail. I am optimistic that it will all happen, but maybe it will take some time. The true impact of the book in terms of its transformative potential will come very soon, and I do not think we have experienced the full potential of this book to make change. It is important to focus on the literary dimensions, the creative potential of the book, and the unique

<sup>21</sup> Claire Loughnan, "No Friend but the Mountains by Behrouz Boochani," *International State Crime Initiative*, 2019, <http://statecrime.org/state-crime-research/no-friend-but-the-mountains-by-behrouz-boochani/>.

<sup>22</sup> Fatima Measham was one of the judges for the Victorian Premier's Prize for Non-Fiction, and author of this article about Boochani's and my work: Fatima Measham, "Love in a Time of Apocalypse," *Meanjin*, 2019, <https://meanjin.com.au/essays/love-in-a-time-of-apocalypse/>.

circumstances of its production.<sup>23</sup> It is also vital to dedicate equal attention and energy to the question of what we need to do next, and how to change things. I have addressed this issue in different places, arguing that a multi-pronged approach needs to be taken.<sup>24</sup> Two things in particular: one, the material conditions need to be transformed, so for instance investigating the companies profiting from border regimes. This is an industry, this is about capitalism, this is one of the symptoms of neoliberal capitalism and neoliberal policies.<sup>25</sup> These sites exist because people are profiting from them, so we need to find ways to cut off supply chains. Maybe academics, for instance, can start with their institutions and look at how our universities are profiting from this, or how they are investing, and which ways they are investing in it. We can then move on to lobbying politicians, challenging the media industry; so much of this has to do with the media.

Together we could find ways of disrupting and influencing the discourse and the role of the media, journalists could be held accountable, and maybe we can even start talking about the role of unions. People working in detention centers are all members of unions. How are unions involved in the industry? And what could they do to change the situation? Would people work in these places if the unions refused to be involved? I do not have a definite answer, but these are some conversations that we could have if we wanted to make sustainable change, make systemic changes. So

<sup>23</sup> Omid Tofighian, "Behrouz Boochani and the Manus Prison Narratives: Merging Translation with Philosophical Reading," 532–40; Omid Tofighian, "Translator's Tale: A Window to the Mountains, xi–xxxiv; Omid Tofighian, "No Friend but the Mountains: Translator's Reflections," 359–74; Omid Tofighian, "Truth to Power: My Time Translating Behrouz Boochani's Masterpiece.," Omid Tofighian, "Writing from Manus prison: a scathing critique of domination and oppression," *The Guardian*, July 31, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/31/writing-from-manus-prison-a-scathing-critique-of-domination-and-oppression>; Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, (2019), "No Friend but the Mountains: Translation as Literary Experimentation and Shared Philosophical Activity," in *In the Shoes of the Other: Interdisciplinary Essays in Translation Studies from Cairo*, ed. Samia Mehrez (Cairo: Kotob Khan, 2019); Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, "The Last Days in Manus Prison".

<sup>24</sup> Omid Tofighian, "Behrouz Boochani and the Politics of Naming," *Australian Book Review*, 413 (2019), <https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/abr-online/archive/2019/371-august-2019-no-413/5688-behrouz-boochani-and-the-politics-of-naming-by-omid-tofighian>; Arash Davari, Omid Tofighian, Golnar Nikpour, and Naveed Mansoori, "Is Abolition Global? Iran, Iranians, and Prison Politics (Part 1)," *Jadaliyya*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41658>; Arash Davari, Omid Tofighian, Golnar Nikpour, and Naveed Mansoori, "Is Abolition Global? Iran, Iranians, and Prison Politics (Part 2)," *Jadaliyya*, September 8, 2020, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/41668/Is-Abolition-Global-Iran,-Iranians,-and-Prison-Politics>.

<sup>25</sup> Behrouz Boochani, "The Boats are Coming". Behrouz Boochani, "The Paladin Scandal is Only a Drop in the Ocean of Corruption on Manus and Nauru," *The Guardian*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/27/the-paladin-scandal-is-only-a-drop-in-the-ocean-of-corruption-on-manus-and-nauru>.

on the one hand, addressing the material conditions is pivotal. On the other hand, we need to consider the connection between politics, violence, and epistemology. That is, the epistemic transformations that need to take place to dismantle the border-industrial complex and stereotypes about refugees.<sup>26</sup> I think everyone across the political spectrum has the potential to contribute to the marginalization and dehumanization of people seeking asylum – in some cases, unknowingly. The notion of refugees as weak, needy, passive, even quirky and exotic; all of these sorts of things are replicated in different discourses, studies, and cultural productions.<sup>27</sup> In this case, maybe we can start with, for instance, the curriculum and cultural activities. It is important to transform the decision-making processes when it comes to activities, events, and programs related to displaced and exiled peoples. How can we then center a more empowered and a more active identity, or a more multidimensional and respectful understanding of displacement and exile? How can we think about people who have experienced these sorts of situations as knowledge producers?<sup>28</sup>

One of the things that Behrouz has done is completely disrupt the low expectations of refugees in relation to their intellectual and creative capacities, in combination with other assumptions and stereotypes; he does not need anyone to write for him, he does not need anyone to talk on his behalf, he does not ask for a savior. He is saying, “Actually, I’m contributing to you, people in Australia, I’m doing something for you. You need to follow up on this in terms of your own situation, your own identity, your own sense of self, your own moral quagmire.” So, a multi-pronged approach is necessary – one particularly focusing on the symbolic, the aesthetic, the epistemic; the other one about transforming the material conditions. Another necessary approach is to create infrastructures and provide spaces and opportunities and resources for

<sup>26</sup> Umut Ozguc, “Borders, Detention, and the Disruptive Power of the Noisy-Subject,” *International Political Sociology* 14.1 (2020): 77–93; Arash Davari, Omid Tofighian, Golnar Nikpour, and Naveed Mansoori, “Is Abolition Global? Iran, Iranians, and Prison Politics (Part 1 and 2); Omid Tofighian, “Behrouz Boochani and the Politics of Naming.”

<sup>27</sup> Omid Tofighian, “No Friend but the Mountains: Translator’s Reflections,” 359–74.

<sup>28</sup> Mahnaz Alimardanian, “Ethnography of a Nightmare: Public Anthropology, Indefinite Detention and Innovative Writing,” *American Ethnologist* 47.1 (2020); Umut Ozguc, “Borders, Detention, and the Disruptive Power of the Noisy-Subject,” 77–93; Behrouz Boochani, “Manus Prison Poetics/Our Voice: Revisiting ‘A Letter from Manus Island,’” a reply to Anne Surma, trans. Omid Tofighian, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32.3 (2018): 527–31; Anne Surma, “In a Different Voice: ‘A Letter from Manus Island’ as Poetic Manifesto,” *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32.3 (2018): 518–26; Behrouz Boochani and Omid Tofighian, “No Friend but the Mountains: Translation as Literary Experimentation and Shared Philosophical Activity,” in *In the Shoes of the Other: Interdisciplinary Essays in Translation Studies from Cairo*, ed. Samia Mehrez (Cairo: Kotob Khan, 2019).

conversations and planning to take place; and this needs to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as refugees in leadership roles. Empowerment and liberation is relational; a progressive Australia for all people can incorporate better policies in relation to displacement and exile, and then when those conversations take place new epistemologies emerge, new conversations between different epistemologies take place, and then new epistemic possibilities arise. This way we can start having more meaningful discourses and finding solutions, creating possibilities for global movements and global solidarity. Rather than make suggestions or prescribe anything, I think maybe it is more important to talk about what conditions would give rise to a more meaningful, humane, and progressive approach. Again, that would require not just the material conditions, but also a shift when it comes to the epistemic, the aesthetic, and the symbolic. In this case everyone benefits, in the same way everyone loses out when forms of intersectional discrimination are amplified and supported, and people are pitted against each other; particularly when the kind of lies, exploitation, and corruption tied up with the detention industry is enhanced. The right kind of infrastructure will then unleash epistemic, aesthetic, and moral possibilities.

Moral imagination cannot be underestimated here; the solution requires a moral imagination in order to create fairer ways of seeing societies and relationships between communities. Another point that is sometimes forgotten is environmental degradation. The detention industry is contributing to the destruction of the natural environment and that is one of the things that Behrouz challenges in his work, as well. The way that the prison works against nature, or works to destroy nature, it is not just about human beings but also the animal world, the natural world.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, new approaches, new ways, new platforms, new possibilities, and new relationships must also address human-animal relationships, our relationship with the environment.

Manus Prison Theory analyzes the inside-outside dynamic: the idea that what happens on the border is, in many respects, about what happens inside the border. It is not just about keeping people out, it is also about controlling people within. There are political theorists and experts in critical border studies who talk about this kind of relationship, they critically analyze mainly with a focus on the socio-economic factors and

<sup>29</sup> Fatima Measham, "Love in a Time of Apocalypse," *Meanjin*, 2019, Winter, <https://meanjin.com.au/essays/love-in-a-time-of-apocalypse/>.

outcomes<sup>30</sup> but we want to focus more on the epistemic, the cultural, the existential, and produce new discourses and actions. Manus Prison Theory makes this important contribution: it overturns the dominant narratives, it exposes the narratives we are operating with and imagines how they can be challenged, and why they need to be rethought.

### \*Contributor Details

**Omid Tofighian** is an award-winning lecturer, researcher, and community advocate, combining philosophy with interests in citizen media, popular culture, displacement, and discrimination. He completed his PhD in philosophy at Leiden University, Netherlands, and graduated with a combined honors degree in philosophy and studies in religion at the University of Sydney. Tofighian has lived variously in Australia where he taught at different universities; the United Arab Emirates where he taught at Abu Dhabi University; Belgium where he was a visiting scholar at K.U. Leuven; Netherlands for his PhD; intermittent periods in Iran for research; and in Egypt where he was Assistant Professor at American University in Cairo. His current roles include Adjunct Lecturer in the School of Arts & Media at University of New South Wales; Fellow at Birkbeck Law, University of London; Honorary Research Associate for the Department of Philosophy, University of Sydney; member of Border Criminologies, University of Oxford; faculty at Iran Academia; and campaign manager for *Why Is My Curriculum White? – Australasia*. He contributes to community arts and cultural projects and works with refugees, migrants, and youth. He has published numerous book chapters, journal articles, and translations; is author of *Myth and Philosophy in Platonic Dialogues* (Palgrave 2016); translator of Behrouz Boochani's book *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison* (Picador 2018); and co-editor of special journal issues for *Literature and Aesthetics* (2011), *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* (2019), and *Southerly* (2021).

**Behrouz Boochani** graduated from Tarbiat Moallem University and Tarbiat Modares University, both in Tehran; he holds a Masters degree in political science, political geography, and geopolitics. He is a Kurdish-Iranian writer, journalist, scholar, cultural advocate, and filmmaker. From 2013 to 2019 he was a political prisoner incarcerated by the Australian government in the Manus Island immigration detention centre in Papua New Guinea (officially called the Manus Regional Processing Centre). He managed to escape to New Zealand in November 2019; he currently resides in Christchurch as a resident of Aotearoa New Zealand. Boochani was writer for the Kurdish language magazine *Werya*; is Adjunct Associate Professor of Social Sciences at UNSW; non-resident Visiting Scholar at the Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre (SAPMiC), University of Sydney; Visiting Professor at Birkbeck Law, University of London; member of Border Criminologies, University of Oxford; Honorary (Principal Fellow) within Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne; Senior Adjunct Research Fellow with the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre, University of Canterbury – Aotearoa NZ; Honorary Member of PEN International; and winner of an Amnesty International Australia 2017 Media Award, the Diaspora Symposium Social Justice

<sup>30</sup> Chandran Kukathas, "Controlling Immigration Means Controlling Citizens," Mercatus Center: F. A. Hayek Program, 2018, April 25, <https://ppe.mercatus.org/%5Bnode%3A%5D/essays/chandran-kukathas-controlling-immigration-means-controlling-citizens>; Chandran Kukathas, *Immigration and Freedom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

Award, the Liberty Victoria 2018 Empty Chair Award, and the Anna Politkovskaya award for journalism. He publishes regularly with *The Guardian*, and his writing also features in *The Saturday Paper*, *Huffington Post*, *New Matilda*, *The Financial Times*, *New York Times*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Boochani is also co-director (with Arash Kamali Sarvestani) of the 2017 feature-length film *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time*; collaborator on Nazanin Sahamizadeh's play *Manus*; associate producer for Hoda Afshar's video installation *Remain* (2018) and the accompanying photography portrait series; and author of *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing From Manus Prison* (Picador 2018). At the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards 2019 his book won the Victorian Prize for Literature in addition to the Victorian Premier's Prize for Non-Fiction. He has also won the Special Award at the 2019 NSW Premier's Literary Awards; Non-Fiction Book of the Year, 2019 Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIA); the 2019 National Biography Prize; and the 2019 ABIA Audiobook of the Year. In North America the book was awarded the Foreword Indies Choice Prize for Non-Fiction.