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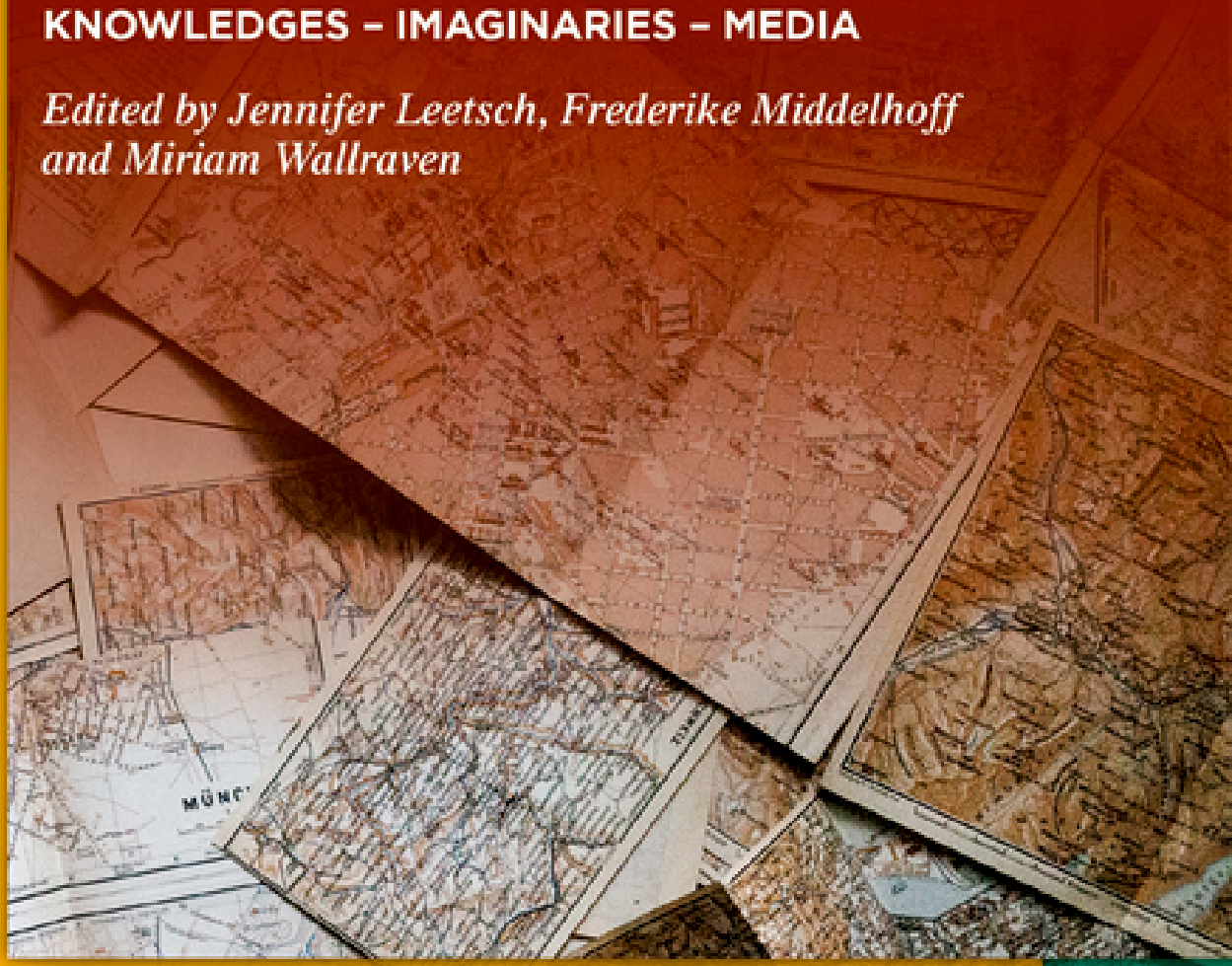
CONFIGURATIONS OF MIGRATION

KNOWLEDGES – IMAGINARIES – MEDIA

Edited by Jennifer Leetsch, Frederike Middelhoff and Miriam Wallraven



TRANSNATIONAL APPROACHES TO CULTURE

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Configurations of Migration

Transnational Approaches to Culture

Edited by
Ela Gezen and Benedict Schofield

Volume 1

Configurations of Migration

Knowledges – Imaginaries – Media

Edited by
Jennifer Leetsch, Frederike Middelhoff
and Miriam Wallraven

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Jennifer Leetsch, Frederike Middelhoff and Miriam Wallraven

Chapter 1
Introduction: Configurations of Migration

At a time when state, public and sometimes even academic responses to migration have taken a hostile turn in many Western countries and along the borders of "Fortress Europe," it is more important than ever to untangle the ways in which migration fundamentally re-configures the worlds we collectively inhabit. This volume explores how cultural productions of and about migration influence the formation and distribution of migration knowledges, as well as how representations of migration can shape our imagination. Historical and contemporary migration movements have long-reaching effects, and they deeply affect social, emotional, political, economic and ecological lived realities. The UN Refugee Agency reported the highest level of forced migration recorded yet in 2020, with more than 82.4 million people displaced globally.[1] As migration scholar Elena Fiddian-Qasmiye argues, "people seeking refuge from conflict and mass human rights violations as well as from persecution and poverty across the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, have crossed and resisted national boundaries both within and across many geopolitical areas."[2] Nation states and civil societies have found and still find themselves increasingly implicated in a "series of interconnected conflicts and crises,"[3] with immense reverberations across various levels of twenty-first-century societies – the Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when we are completing this introduction, being the most recent example. The need, even in times of other crises,[4] to not only think about but

1 As the UNHCR reports show, the COVID-19 pandemic has not slowed down global migration and displacement processes. Cf. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020," UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/ (29 April 2022).

2 "Refuge in a Moving World: The 'Refuge in a Moving World' Network," UCL Institute of Advanced Studies, https://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/news-events/news/news-archive/2015/october-2015/refuge-in-a-moving-world (13 March 2022). Cf. also Elena Fiddian-Qasmiye, *Refuge in a Moving World: Tracing Refugee and Migrant Journeys Across Disciplines* (London: UCL Press, 2020).

3 "Refuge in a Moving World: The 'Refuge in a Moving World' Network."

4 During the COVID-19 pandemic, media coverage has largely been redirected from capsized boats in the Mediterranean to patients and doctors in intensive care units and protests marches against restrictions. Concurrently, however, enmities towards migrants, especially of Asian descent, have risen throughout Europe. Cf. Cameron Boyle, "A Change in Tone? Media Coverage of Immigration Before and After COVID-19," https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/04/01/2021/change-tone-media-coverage-immigration-and-after-covid-19, *Global Policy*, 4 January 2021 (13 March 2022); "Sentiment towards Migration during COVID-19," International Organization for Migration (IOM),

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to also act on behalf of those more vulnerable, more exposed to violence, death and illness, is paramount.

The questions we would like to raise with this book pertain to the knowability, and thus to a critical and empathetic understanding, of the cultural approaches to and lived realities of displacement and migration: How can transnational migration be rendered visible in its complex social, political, personal and emotional dimensions? How can experiences of flight, exile and migration become intelligible? As literary and cultural studies scholars, we assert that art and creative expression proffer spaces of possibility to advance knowledges of and about migration: Migration (hi)stories, as they are adapted for and live forth on screens, stages and in stories influence the formation and distribution of knowledge about migration. In view of the current socio-political and economic prevalence of global migration movements, as sketched above, modes of representation, medialisation and interpretation regarding individual and collective migration need to be foregrounded more insistently. At the heights and in the aftermath of the so-called "refugee crisis" in Europe, various artistic and cultural productions have vigorously engaged with migration politics, the reception of which resulted in affective responses ranging from acclaim to alarm. As early as 2015, the playwright and novelist Elfriede Jelinek centred the discrimination of migrants and the biased practices of "naturalisation" in Austria in *Die Schutzbefohlenen* (*The Supplicants*); the play, which premiered in Vienna on a stage flooded with water, condemned the ignorance of the "wards" towards the needs of the refugee protagonists. Other literary examples which assess fraught migrant histories include Warsan Shire's poetry about the Somali Civil War or the *Refugee Tales* volumes (2016–2021), which present stories by refugees "as told to" and then written down by authors such as Ali Smith, Abdulrazak Gurnah or Bernardine Evaristo. Gianfranco Rosi's documentary film *Fuocoammare*, or *Fire at Sea* (2016), dwells on Europe's failure to respond to refugee needs by contrasting the plight of African migrants arriving at Lampedusa with the comforts of everyday life on the island.[5] Ai Weiwei's self-portrait as Aylan Kurdi (2016), a two-year old Syrian boy of Kurdish background who had drowned and washed ashore on a

November 3, 2021, https://publications.iom.int/books/sentiment-towards-migration-during-covid-19-what-twitter-data-can-tell-us (13 March 2022).

5 Other recent literary and artistic examples of giving voice to refugee and migrant subjectivities include the documentary theatre projects *Asyl-Monologe* and *Asyl-Dialoge*, performed by actors of the Bühne für Menschenrechte [Stage of Human Rights] (cf. also the Mittelmeer-Monologe [Mediterranean Monologues] by the same director, Michael Ruf); the drama *Mediterranea* (directed and written by Jonas Carpignano, 2015) which focusses on migrants en route to Italy; the collective art exhibition *Borderless* at London's Migration Museum; or *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature*, ed. Dohra Ahmad (London: Penguin, 2019).

Turkish beach near holiday resorts at Bodrum, triggered controversial discussions about the ethics of representation and the role of art in public and political imaginaries about migration and refuge.

These are just some of the many examples with which writers and artists across the globe have recently attempted to grapple with the effects of increased (enforced) migrational mobility. Emma Cox, Sam Durrant, David Farrier, Lyndsey Stonebridge and Agnes Woolley conceive of such creative output as "artistic imaginaries – literary, theatrical and cinematic work by and about refugees," but also as ways in which refugees and migrants "are figured and interact in various social spheres."[6] Within the visual, performative and literary contexts described above, different systems of knowledge emerge as a result of varying medial strategies. Warsan Shire's now acclaimed spoken-word poem "Home," cited by numerous media outlets to critically draw attention to the growing representation of refugees as spectacle and threat and shared thousands of times on social media platforms such as Twitter or Tumblr,[7] travelled along very different routes into the public (un)conscious than, for example, Ai Weiwei's aforementioned controversial re-enactment of the icon-like photograph of Aylan Kurdi, originally taken by Turkish journalist Nilüfer Demir, which he unveiled months after Kurdi's death at the India Art Fair in Delhi in an exhibition of self-portraits.[8] As Anne-Marie Fortier has succinctly argued in her work on migration,

> [a]ttending to representations is attending to the ways of seeing that various texts open up (or close down) and to the range of experiences, feelings and opinions that they simultaneously produce and occlude for those who are positioned variously migrant of non-migrant subjects in a "here" or "there" world.[9]

By critically exploring these intricate dynamics of migration, artistic practices can point towards the necessity of remaining critically aware of the perspectives and figurations they allow for, but may also obstruct, when migration is imagined.

The humanities have long been arguing that cultural productions – literary texts, visual and experimental art, theatre and film, digital and social media –

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6 Emma Cox, Sam Durrant, David Farrier, Lyndsey Stonebridge and Agnes Woolley, "Introduction," in *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities*, eds. Emma Cox et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 5.

7 Cf. Jennifer Leetsch, "Ocean Imaginaries in Warsan Shire's Afro-Diasporic Poetry," *Journal of the African Literature Association* 13.1 (2019): 80–95.

8 Cf. Mette Mortensen, "Constructing, Confirming, and Contesting Icons: The Alan Kurdi Imagery Appropriated by #humanitywashedashore, Ai Weiwei, and Charlie Hebdo," *Media, Culture & Society* 39.8 (2017): 1142–1161.

9 Anne-Marie Fortier, "Migration Studies," in *Handbook of Mobilities*, ed. Peter Adey (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), 69.

affect our point of view towards migration.[10] Such forms of cultural expression are part and parcel of what constitutes the "migration imaginary," the social image of migrants. As a paradigmatic precedent to Cox et al.'s notion of refugee imaginaries, Fortier asserts that migration imaginaries "shape and are shaped by regimes of practices [. . .] and inform our ways of seeing and understanding the world."[11] Artistic representations of migration are closely connected to the social and the political sphere, simultaneously emanating from and feeding into expansive economies of affect:

> The migration imaginary shapes understandings of national borders, culture, and identity of citizenship and our relationship to others. It is structured by an ambivalent relationship between desires and anxieties: desires of enrichment, integration, cosmopolitanism; anxieties of invasion, loss (e.g. of resources, of control), chaos (e.g. social tensions, lack of planning), which in turn produce desires to secure national borders, national identity, and cultural integrity.[12]

Migration imaginaries open up a space in which we can name and understand social being and social relations. In other words, "the repertory of symbolic representation and practices that constitute cultural life may exert material force in the everyday existence of a people."[13] An analysis of the figurations of migration and

10 See, among others, Jennifer Burns, *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013); Emma Cox, *Theatre and Migration* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2014); T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Burcu Dogramaci and Birgit Mersmann, eds., *Handbook of Art and Global Migration Theories, Practices, and Challenges* (New York: De Gruyter, 2018); Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller, *Migration and New Media* (London: Routledge, 2012); or Tanya Sheehan, ed., *Photography and Migration* (London, New York: Routledge, 2018). We also concur with Jeffrey et al., however, who caution that "artistic expressions have limits in overcoming unequal power dynamics, conveying experiences of migration and effecting long-term change in a context in which discourse on migration is dominated by short-term political decision-making, and punitive policies force migrants into precarious forms of existence," while also advocating for the entanglements of the art and humanities with political engagement and civic responsibility in the face of oppression and racism. Cf. Laura Jeffery, Mariangela Palladino, Rebecca Rotter and Agnes Woolley, "Creative Engagement with Migration," *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture* 10.1 (2019): 3–17.

11 Anne-Marie Fortier, "Migration Studies," 69.

12 Anne-Marie Fortier, "The Migration Imaginary and the Politics of Personhood," in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder and Ruth Wodak (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 32.

13 Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2008), 5.

their "specific configuration of knowledge, practice and power"[14] from a comparative and transnational perspective,[15] as this volume offers, is therefore crucial for both assessing the cultural varieties of migration imaginaries and unravelling conflicting knowledges about migration.[16] Anne Ring Petersen and Moritz Schramm have emphasised in a similar vein that

> art, culture, and aesthetics have an important role to play with respect to the intensified migration and globalisation that characterise the world today, because globalisation and migration present new and encompassing challenges to imagination and representation, as well as challenging the creation of images (in a broad sense), which is so essential to both individual and collective worldmaking.[17]

It is these challenges to and possibilities for worldmaking that our volume activates with its focus on both migration imaginaries and migration knowledges. It asks questions about how migration imaginaries fuse with and modify knowledges about migration and how such modes of interaction connect to the specific aesthetic qualities of different media. *Configurations of Migration: Knowledges – Imaginaries – Media* reveals the intricate relationship between creative engagements with and knowledges about migration, and probes the ways in which different medial practices are intertwined with different knowledge structures.

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14 Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 4. Cited in Fortier, "Migration Studies," 69.

15 As John McLeod has argued, concerning the potential of the transnational, we should attempt "to think [. . .] across and beyond the tidy, holistic entities of nations and cultures – transnationally, transculturally – if we hope to capture and critique the conditions of our contemporaneity." John McLeod, "Sounding Silence: Transculturation and its Thresholds," *Transnational Literature* 4.1 (2011): 1. This holds particularly true for the understanding of migrant imaginaries and a critical analysis of representations of migrants. Alicia Schmidt Camacho specifically probes the transnational regarding borders and migration, recognising that "[t]he transnational refers to the space in which distinct national localities are linked together by migratory flows, and the diaspora formed by this migration. The transnational may also stand in opposition to the bounded community of the nation-state. As migrants narrate a condition of alterity to, or exclusion from, the nation, they also enunciate a collective desire for a different order of space and belonging across the boundary." Cf. Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, 5.

16 We agree with Cox et al. who argue that "[g]iven that refugee-responsive artistic practice has increased significantly in recent decades, and even more markedly in recent years (to a large extent as a consequence of the high profile afforded to the 'refugee crisis', an act of critical reframing that denotes a crisis for the Global North), it has never been more urgent to ask what the relationship is between audiences and consumers, or whose interests are served by the audiencing of refugee arts." Cox et al., "Introduction," 5.

17 Anne Ring Petersen and Moritz Schramm, "(Post-)Migration in the Age of Globalisation: New Challenges to Imagination and Representation," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9.2 (2017): 1.

In this, this book pursues a two-pronged approach. First, given that imaginations of and aesthetic engagements with migration need to be connected to the epistemological dimensions of migration, the volume aims to analyse the relationship between imaginations and knowledges of migrants and migration systematically. Considering the creation, reception and circulation contexts of specific case studies, our contributors ask: How have fictional texts, performances, images, dance and autobiographical accounts of migration influenced a culturally and historically specific knowledge of migratory experiences? And how can scholars of literature, the visual arts, film, drama and media gain insights into the ways people imagine and acquire knowledge about migration in the process and as a result of reading, viewing and listening to cultural productions addressing issues of migration? In these questions and endeavours, we are motivated by scholarship on migration knowledge which foregrounds the ways in which "knowledge orients individual and collective action" and which understands migrant knowledges not only as knowledges *about* migration, i.e. "the making of state-centered depictions of migrants and migrations," but also as knowledges produced *by* migrants themselves in "an actor-centered 'history-from-below' approach."[18] As the contributors to this volume show, art and literature – ranging from the nineteenth up to the twenty-first century – can bear witness to how the various "makings of" the migrant via classification and ordering processes of state, law and bureaucracy jostle against knowledges which insistently foreground migratory subjectivity, personhood and creativity.

Second, the volume examines the connections between different medial practices of imagining migration to appraise how aesthetic modes of configuring spatial, experiential and structural aspects of migration correspond to migration knowledges in specific sociocultural contexts. Which insights can we gain, and how do these insights differ from one another, when migration is imagined on stage, screen, canvas, or paper? Through touching, looking, listening, dancing? And what difference in terms of perception and response does it make if such cultural productions are either labelled as factual or fictional accounts, as documentary or feature film, (post)migrant or experimental theatre, "based on a true

18 Andrea Westermann and Onur Erdur, "Introduction: Migrant Knowledge: Studying the Epistemic Dynamics That Govern the Thinking in and around Migration, Exile, and Displacement," *Histories of Migrant Knowledge: Transatlantic and Global Perspectives: Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 15 (2020): 6–7. Cf. also Katherine Braun et al., eds. *Wissensproduktionen der Migration*. Special Issue of *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* 4.1. Bielefeld: transcript, 2018.

story" or "a novel"?[19] Such an intermedial and comparative approach that consciously spans disciplines and media within the arts and humanities provides a crucial contribution to the field of migration and mobility studies which has, until now, been dominated by research that focusses on representations of migration unfolding in one specific medium only.[20] Building on such studies, this volume reflects the entanglements of representation and migration knowledges on the one hand and reviews the premises of representation by considering imagination as the precursor to, foundation of, and immediate reaction to any mode of representation, and thus knowledge, on the other hand.

Structure and Contributors

This edited volume originates in a conference which had originally been planned for March 2020 but had to be postponed due to the spread of the corona virus and what would turn into the global COVID-19 pandemic. Contributors came together virtually in February 2021 to discuss the complexities of imagining and knowing migration across different media. This volume expands the discussions of the online workshops and draws in more wide-ranging material, stories, images and interventions. As such, *Configurations of Migration: Knowledges – Imaginaries – Media* brings together a range of scholars, scholar-activists and scholar-artists to investigate the specific properties, possibilities and limitations of the arts and different media to illuminate how cultural and artistic imagination might reflect, affect and produce knowledges in the context of migration. Focusing on the interplay between knowledge and imagination, and by attending to this interplay from the perspectives of literature, film, documentary, theatre, performance, visual arts and media studies, our contributors pay particular attention to the different nexuses inherent to gender, class, race, economy, politics, memory, urbanity and material culture.

The volume explores how knowledge is created, mediated and modified in film and the visual arts in section A, in fictional and autobiographical writing in section B, and on stages and in performance in section C. In following this tri-partite

19 For the concept of a "true-story pact" in life writing concerned with migration, see Miriam Wallraven's chapter in this volume.

20 See for example Krista Lynes, Tyler Morgenstern and Ian Alan Paul, eds., *Moving Images: Mediating Migration as Crisis* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020); Catherine Gomes, *Siloed Diversity: Transnational Migration, Digital Media and Social Networks* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2018) or Tanya Sheehan, ed., *Photography and Migration* (London, New York: Routledge, 2018).

structure, the volume explores how aesthetic and imaginative modes of configuring spatial, experiential, embodied and (infra)structural aspects of migration correspond to migration knowledges in specific sociocultural, material contexts. In this respect, we aspire to capture how various forms of knowledge (popular, scientific, empirical, intuitive etc.) about migration are linked to specific cultural forms of representation. In addition, we investigate the connecting points and different strands between present-day and historical knowledge about and reconfigurations of migration. The geographical focus of the volume centres predominantly on European and English-language contexts, but what always accompanies, and indeed reconfigures, such foci are circum-European, Black Atlantic and Black Mediterranean contexts that rattle notions of "Fortress Europe" so prevalent in recent discussions about migrant "crises" and that shed light on the deep transnational ties of European histories of migration.

The volume opens with an interview with Dutch Surinamese artist **Charl Landvreugd** whose creative, theoretical and curatorial practices address claims of belonging and of civic participation as an undisputable human right for migratory communities. Focusing on a specific art installation, *Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma*, as well as his work as head of research and curatorial practice at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Landvreugd discusses the different layers and in-between spaces of imagining and knowing migration within and beyond art and museum spaces. This opening interview, which is an expansion of Landvreugd's artist intervention at the conference on which this volume is based, leads us from a specific local museum space to the larger theoretical questions discussed throughout our volume.

Section A continues our engagement with *Visualizing Migration* with a chapter on "'Migrating Reflections' on *Misafir* (2017)" by media and film scholar **Hayriye Kapusuz** who analyses the role cinema plays in construing migration imaginaries. Focusing in particular on the representation of the Syrian war in Turkish cinema, she foregrounds visual negotiations of migrant and refugee lives. Examining specific scenes and film stills vis-à-vis semiotic analysis, Kapusuz shows how *Misafir* (*The Guest: Aleppo to Istanbul*, dir. Andaç Haznedaroğlu, 2017) makes it possible to understand visual mediation as a form of knowledge production that goes beyond hegemonic migrant knowledges.

In his chapter titled "Global Warming and Climate Refugees: Facts, 'Alternative Facts,' and State of Exception," scholar and activist **Mahmoud Arghavan** poses an intervention in current discourses about how to imagine and know (about) contemporary migration, by discussing the deeply political and politicised interlinkages of global warming and climate refugees. Focusing on how right-wing, nationalist media have propagated misinformation about climate change and biased images of refugees and migrants, he argues that it is necessary to view

global migration and "refugee crises" through an ecocritical lens to reveal different regimes of truth about migration from the Global South.

Section A closes with a reflective essay by anthropologist and documentary film maker **Léa Coffineau**, which takes a fresh look at the seminal work the Dutch cultural theorist and video artist Mieke Bal has contributed to the field of migration studies, outlining the relevance of (audio)visual art in cultural attitudes towards migration and how migration transgresses the boundaries between cultures. In a subsequent interview with **Mieke Bal**, Coffineau activates the importance Bal's thinking has had for imagining and knowing migratory identities – and for being able to make different societies imaginable.

Section B on *Writing Migration* begins with an exploration of historical migration movements and their literary refractions. In her chapter "'The most outcast *réfugié*!' Knowing Migration in Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *The Réfugié* (1824)" **Frederike Middelhoff** discusses the ways in which de la Motte Fouqué's three-volume novel *The Réfugié* intertwines different histories and experiences of migration related to German-speaking contexts, ranging from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. As Middelhoff shows, de la Motte Fouqué, himself descended from a long line of French religious refugees, mediates knowledges about the disintegration of Huguenot diasporas in Germany and empathetically explores the challenges of political exile around 1800.

Continuing with unexpected migration routes, the next chapter by **Kai Wiegandt**, titled "Western Migrants in Hong Kong: Neo-Imperial Gothic and the Literary Imagination of Reverse Domination," argues that recent decades have seen the emergence of narratives that feature the migration of professionals from the Global North to new economic centres in the Global South, where they occupy subservient, quasi-colonised positions. By discussing Paul Theroux's novel *Kowloon Tong* (1997), Wiegandt reads narratives of reverse domination as symptoms of white anxiety of losing economic, political and cultural influence to regions perceived as threats to global dominance, thus revealing slant knowledges of migration in-between Global "North" and "South."

In her chapter on "Knowledges and Morals: Narrating Consequences of Colonial Migration in Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978)," **Katrin Dennerlein** discusses how Timm's novel initiated a reflection on German colonial history, several decades before the German government spoke of "responsibility" in connection with the genocide of the indigenous population in the former colony of "Deutsch-Südwestafrika" (German Southwest Africa). In a close reading of *Morenga*, commonly understood as the first German-language postcolonial novel, and its protagonist's migrational experiences, Dennerlein traces the connections of morality, colonial and local knowledge, and their mediation through constellations of space and mobility.

Miriam Wallraven, in her chapter "'No narrative to make sense of what had happened': The Genres of Narrating Migration during the Yugoslav Wars in English-Speaking Literature," analyses two autobiographies and a novel which pivot on migration as a consequence of the Yugoslav Wars, Trebinčević's *The Bosnia List* (2014), Reid and Schofield's *Goodbye Sarajevo* (2011), as well as Nović's *Girl at War* (2015). Focusing on migration to English-speaking countries and creating contact zones between the Balkans and Anglophone readers, the texts, even though generically different, as Wallraven shows, insistently emphasise that knowing about migration is the prerequisite for empathy.

Closing out the section on *Writing Migration* is a short story by the author **Olumide Popoola**, titled "You Can't Breathe Water." Posed as a response to previous chapters, this story-essay questions the fictional possibilities of representing the experiences of migration. Countering the ubiquitous medial images of refugees trying to cross the (Mediterranean) sea, the text re-creates, holds and refracts the voices of drowning refugees to not only thematise trauma's silences, but also to explore the bounds and possibilities of literary strategies to represent migration. Like the interview with Charl Landvreugd, and the following contribution by Ananya Kabir, this story reflects the conference on which this book is based. Popoola, a London-based Nigerian-German writer, read from her novel *When We Speak of Nothing* (2017), the short story collection *breach* (2016) and this short piece, which we are grateful to be reprinting here, and the discussion with the author was vital in shaping our and our contributors' understanding of the categories of home, displacement and belonging.

The last section, Section C on *Performing Migration*, opens with a chapter by **Ananya Jahanara Kabir** on "Archive-Repertoires of Memory: Knowing Migration through Shailesh Bahoran's Dance." In it, Kabir interweaves intricate and wide-reaching migration histories by paying close attention to dance, movement and bodies. Deep in conversation with dancer Shailesh Bahoran's œuvre and other archives, she argues for an (un)making of migration through dance, through which may be linked the African and Indian diasporas that empire and capitalism triggered in waves – the diasporas from the African continent instigated by slavery, and the subsequent diasporas from the Indian subcontinent instigated by indentured labour.

Continuing this focus on performance art in her chapter on "Performing Migration: Želimir Žilnik and Medial (Self-)Representations of 'Guest Workers' in the 1970s," **Burcu Dogramaci** focuses on the artistic representation of Turkish labour migration to Germany in the late twentieth century. Analysing visual art works by Želimir Žilnik and Nil Yalter, the chapter discusses which opportunities for personal empowerment docu-artistic projects provided for migrants. She shows how the relationship between medial recording and performance makes it possible to

render experiences of migration as a performative act – with the participation of actors and audiences who produce synchronous migratory knowledges.

Section C closes with a chapter by **Jennifer Leetsch** on a recent Black British theatre performance, titled "Walking the Land: Theatre, Landscape and Britain's Migratory Past in *Black Men Walking*." Through articulating feelings of attachment to local landscapes, the play, as Leetsch argues, foregrounds how landscapes, both (re-)imagined and actual ones, are capable of resurrecting histories of people, places, and events – thus conveying deeply personal, embodied migratory knowledges to audiences across the UK and beyond.

By having collated these contributions in our three sections on visualizing, writing and performing migration, *Configurations of Migration: Knowledges – Imaginaries – Media* strives to act as a repertoire for thinking more insistently about a world which increasingly forces people to leave their homes for political, economic and ecological reasons, and, to return to Elena Fiddian-Qasmiye, for encouraging us "to critically reflect on 'who we are' and 'who we are to one another' across a range of fields of thought, practice and (in)action."[21] Our authors' contributions suggest a wide variety of possible avenues of thinking about migration in historical and contemporary contexts – from academic, activist or artistic perspectives and places of entanglement. Exploring how the arts contribute to our thinking about migration by rendering visible unnoticed (or disregarded) dimensions of displacement, exile and making home in unhomely spaces, or by challenging and countering biased narratives of migration, the chapters of this book offer important perspectives on the complex dynamics of migration imaginaries past and present. Ultimately, this volume hopes to show that by crossing between disciplines within the humanities, in relation to and in conversation with migration studies, new spaces of creative, theoretical and conceptual engagement and collaborative thinking-together can be opened up once we try to know and imagine migration differently.

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Section A: **Visualizing Migration**

Charl Landvreugd, Jennifer Leetsch and Heike Raphael-Hernandez

Chapter 2
Imagining Migration In-Between: A Conversation with Charl Landvreugd

Jennifer Leetsch (JL): At our 2021 conference on *Imagining Migration, Knowing Migration: Intermedial Perspectives* you gave a keynote titled "*Notes on Ososma*: Imagining Spaces." Before we delve a bit deeper into the art installation on which your keynote intervention was based (*Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma*) and then move towards your current work at Stedelijk Museum, let us start off with a question about space and belonging and home.

You grew up in Rotterdam and now work in Amsterdam. City spaces – public and private, communal and individual – are spaces of great imaginary potential, in particular for communities often perceived as other to the white, European hegemonic nation state. As Homi Bhabha has argued,

> It is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation [. . .] It is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. It is there that, in our time, the perplexity of the living is most acutely experienced.[1]

We wondered if you could talk a bit about the possible meaning that urban space holds for you, your art and your theoretical engagement with art.

Charl Landvreugd (CL): Growing up in Rotterdam has formed how I think about how people come together. Spending my youth with people from different backgrounds meant that calling each other names as a form of insult is something you could only do once or twice before it got old. Consequently, at a very young age already, and as a way of self-preservation, you are forced to move beyond racial prejudice, ethnic and physical differences and find common ground based on something else. I would therefore say that the urban space is one in which difference is the default from which a new understanding of the self and one's relation to others emerges. This assimilation into a self-styled default, and immersion into a shared way of being does, however, erase parts of the specificity of one's cultural, and ethnic background. As a consequence of how the world does not accept difference as default, my art has been strongly influenced by connecting back to the particularities of my own cultural and

1 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, [1994] 2004), 243.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-002

ethnic background. Nevertheless, the lessons learned in my youth have a strong influence on how I engaged with this re-connection.

JL: Building on this notion of urban space as a site of difference, relationality and transformation, in your keynote you spoke about the black perspective in the Netherlands and the need to insistently position blackness as a central idea. Moving from urban space to a wider frame, how would you position yourself as an artist and as a researcher within global, or perhaps even planetary, sets of reference and relationality?

CL: The notion of positioning Blackness as a central idea is connected to how to understand the (Western) world from the position of this black body. For a very long time, whiteness has been the mirror in which everything was reflected, and it had a strong influence on this multi-ethnic self-styled urban default. As a person and artist reflecting my presence and work in my ethnic background and global Blackness results in an outlook that draws everything into the contemporary, into the today. In my work there is a strong connection to Sun Ra and what is known as Afro-Futurism. However, the future is here and now and not then and in outer space. The Black Dutch perspective now finds resonance in an environment of accelerated digital culture that is global and influences the whole planet.

JL: When you gave the keynote you, in a first step, positioned yourself as living in in-between spaces and disciplines, between and amidst photography, writing, curation – between different media and between forms and formats. You theorised hybridity as something "emerging from the fold" and said that it does not make sense that one is either one or the other. There is something alive and something generative in ideas of the "yet-to-come" and the "already there," which you pointed towards during your talk. Could you perhaps talk a bit more about the potential but also the pitfalls that come with hybridity, the in-between?

CL: The in-between is a great space from which to emerge. As we can see in the poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard* (*A Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance*) by the French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé, the text which meanders on both pages simultaneously draws together disparate spaces and creates what we focus on.[2] The focus is supported by the fold which is an active space that holds together the pages. When Rosalind Krauss explained this during a class I attended during my Masters studies at Columbia University, I immediately understood the fold as

2 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1914). This is the first publication of the poem in book form.

a space of its own from which one can emerge as a subjectivity. This fold is not in competition with the two pages and its existence leaves them intact. Even better, the fold emerges as a result of the pages. The subjectivity in the fold, in the in-between, is something to explore and, in that sense, it is yet-to-come but was always already there. Because it is in front of our very eyes and because it is unexplored, it has a lot of potential. The biggest pitfall is to understand it as a mixture or hybrid of the two different pages or different cultures rather than as a construct referencing only itself. This understanding of the in-between as a self-contained space within the larger hegemony of let's say capital is imperative to my work in the arts.

JL: This discussion of the in-between is a good moment to move to *Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma*,[3] we think. After all, what immediately comes to the fore here is the hybridity of the format: it is artwork and installation at once, it is both personal and public, open and closed, intimate and worldly. We would love to hear about the impetus behind titling your work "Ososma" and about the multiple, intersecting meanings of this term for your work.

CL: Ososma is a Surinamese word that literally translates as 'people of the house'. In its everyday usage it refers to the people that are at home in your house and that are your kin through many different long-standing relationships. When we translate that to a larger cultural meaning in the Netherlands, arguably people of Surinamese descent and people from all former colonies are Ososma. In such relationships Ososma have a strong influence on your household and the raising of your children. They bring form and meaning that transform how you see and experience yourself. At the same time, they are influenced as well. The installation should be understood in these terms where a classical Afro Surinamese carving and painting tradition was transformed into a three-dimensional space (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).[4]

3 The solo installation-exhibition *Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma* was first shown in 2019 at Centrum voor Beeldende Kunst Zuid-Oost in Amsterdam and features "an overview of artworks and the periods in which they were created – Landvreugd calls them 'movements' – that cross his diverse work as an artist, curator, academic researcher, and leading nightclub organizer in Rotterdam in the 1990s. [. . .] Each pavilion is named after a city the artist has lived in. These cities are his and others' homes, just as the intersecting historical trajectories that culminate in his work – from the transatlantic slave trade to anticolonial struggle, from the Afro-Surinamese heritage of the Winti religion to radical futurology, and from clubbing aesthetics to queer intimacies – are his and many others' herstory." Jonas Staal, "Charl Landvreugd's 'Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma,'" https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/304349/charl-landvreugd-s-movt-nr-10-ososma, *Art Agenda*, 4 December 2019 (7 February 2023).

4 Ososma is realised in Landvreugd's installation by figuring the Tembe, a form of Surinamese woodcarving art, into three-dimensional space. As Staal writes, "Tembe is an umbrella term that describes the traditional artform of the Maroon people – also known as *Fiimen* or 'free people,' referencing their struggle for liberation from Dutch colonizers starting in the mid-seventeenth

Fig. 1: Tembe on which *Movt. Nr. 10* is based. © Charl Landvreugd.

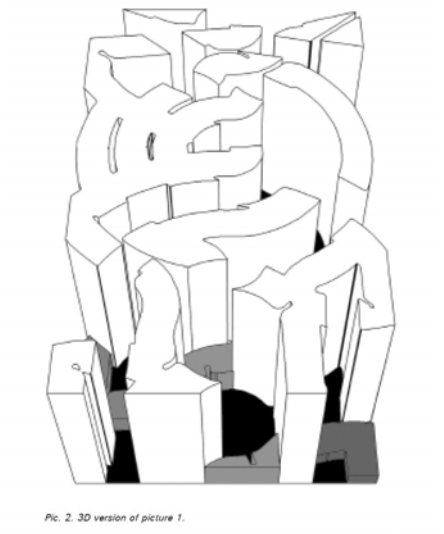

Fig. 2: 3D version of Fig. 1. © Charl Landvreugd.

The form that emerged was not only new to the Dutch artistic landscape but was also new in the Afro Surinamese tradition. It should not be understood, however, as a hybrid of two cultural spaces. The form of the installation emerged from the fold, the in-betweenness where it only referenced itself as in potential always having been there.

JL: *Ososma* is a space of experience and feeling – feeling here referring to its multiple connotations: a tactile sensation but also a state of mind, of being moved. In the context of our conference and this edited volume, we are particularly concerned with the interplay of imagining and (or *versus*) knowing migration and migratory realities.

As Mieke Bal has outlined in a recent interview with *Stedelijk Studies*, and as she explains in the conversation included in this edited volume with anthropologist and documentary film maker Léa Coffineau, a migratory aesthetics does not necessarily mean a direct representation of migration itself but can be thought and theorised as a metaphor for experiences that are sense-based and affective.[5] Could you talk a little about how you conceived *Ososma* as something to be experienced, and not merely viewed in an impassive, voyeuristic manner?

CL: Apart from walking through a space that felt more like a labyrinth than an exhibition the floor of the space was covered with $6m^3$ of Waddenzee seashells (see Fig. 3).

Walking into the space meant that one would inevitably step onto them. The sound of cracking seashells under one's feet immediately produced an uncomfortable feeling. The feeling that one had done wrong or had destroyed something. The shells were also unevenly placed which led to a feeling of unbalance while moving through the space. This is a big part of the everyday migrant experience while moving through a majority culture space. In the exhibition, the individual works were not highlighted by means of illumination. While inconspicuously being present they had to be noticed and approached if a relation with them was to be established. Being unnoticed as a subject worthy of illumination is also an

century – that is characterized by complex geometrical patterns. These manifest in carved sculptural wooden objects, architectural designs, painted textiles, and utilitarian objects. In this *ososma*, the Tembe organizes modernist heritage, not the other way around." Staal, "Charl Landvreugd's 'Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma,'" 2019. For a bird's eye view on the exhibition space, see Figure 3.

5 Britte Sloothaak, "Mieke Bal: Looking at Art through Cultural Analysis," https://stedelijkstudies.com/looking-at-art-through-cultural-analysis-mieke-bal/#av_section_2, *Stedelijk Studies*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (7 February 2023).

Fig. 3: Charl Landvreugd, *Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma*, 2019. Wood, concrete, Wadden seashells, sequins, 25 x 15 x 5 m. Commission by CBK Zuidoost; Image courtesy of CBK Zuidoost, Amsterdam. © Lesley Adu.

everyday migrant experience. Effectively one could argue that, even though I was not aware of Mieke Bal's definition, the installation can be theorised through the lens of migratory aesthetics. For me it was a move away from actively portraying Blackness to an abstraction that could hold the experience of being a minority in the Netherlands while at the same time speaking to those who do not have this specific background.

JL: To dig deeper into the dimension of participation, and embodied experiences in art and installation, we would like to address the question of material and materiality, and its connected-ness to home (or many homes): in *Ososma* we have, as you mention, the Wadden Sea shells which crunch under the feet, the wooden material used to build the structures, the soap and salt used in the Brussels pavilion and Virgin Europe – all these materials have links to certain places or journeys, and we would be interested in the meaning behind using these materials:

CL: The 12 pavilions (separate parts of the installation) all were named after places I have lived. In and around them I placed works that were made in these locations or had a strong connection to them. All the materials and how they were placed all held personal references for me. Things I had seen or experiences I have had. It is not that easy to speak of all the meanings that come together in the

installation as there are so many. But, to speak of the Brussels pavilion which held the Virgin Europe, the soap is a reference to the idea of whitewashing. The salt is a reference to the Afro Diaspora legend that our ancestors who were enslaved and did not eat salt because the salt ties you to the earth. Not consuming salt would allow them to fly back to Africa (after death). We, their children do eat salt and consequently we are tied to this European land and are forever connected to the Virgin Europe who cannot be whitewashed anymore. Explaining this is not very useful and cheesy and literal. What is useful however is to stand in front of her and smell the tackiness of cheap soap and feeling the presence of the salt and understanding what this experience does to you.

Heike Raphael-Hernandez (HRH): Let us now move from the specificity of your art and the installation, *Movt. Nr. 10: Ososma*, to the more wide-reaching implications of the museum, a mediating space for art and the imagination, and towards your current work at Stedelijk Museum. The typical museum space, as many of us perceive the function of this space, is a place where either entire nations or local communities, for example, preserve a certain idea about the past by displaying artifacts. Visitors can then contemplate the past itself or the past's cultural or ideological connection to the present. Ideally, the museum can also contribute to ongoing dialogues on difficult issues connected to this past. You are the Head of Research and Curatorial Practices at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In your different publications, you talk about the idea that you have an additional vision for the space of the museum. Can you tell us about this? What is your vision?

CL: The museum is a tool by the establishment to preserve a system of hegemony. Yet, there is a decline of the hegemony of the Northwest. With the decline of the hegemony comes also a decline of the museum and its value for society, for education, and for the spreading of culture. That is when a tension arises, at least in the Netherlands. People want to see exhibitions that glorify their culture as superior over the other. If a museum does not do this, we have issues. I am interested in this crossroad: It is this tension between preserving the past without becoming a museum of the past. The suggestion that is now embraced is to understand the long twentieth century collection as something to explore as the production of a particular culture in a particular time. On the other side, and possibly but not necessarily as an extension, is the twenty-first century collection that has different rules and aesthetic considerations and is now being built through acquisitions. As custodians and gatekeepers, the task at hand is to check our prejudices and assumptions.

HRH: Nowadays, many museums in the Western hemisphere seem to be aware of the need to connect to the rapidly changing and increasingly diverse communities in their midst, yet they seem to struggle with the new approach you are calling for.

In your publications, you have repeatedly talked about the connection between citizenship and belonging and the need to express this, for example, in European visual art. In addition, you have stressed the point that it is not just about displaying art by some representatives of certain migrant communities. You call for a different approach to the migratory essence. Can you elaborate more?

CL: I know that we have more than 20% of Dutch people who have an immigrant background These backgrounds are not only from countries of the Global South, but also from Poland, Romania, and other European spaces. With that in mind, what does it mean when we say that we are talking about a local or European culture? We all have an aunt in New York and an uncle in Berlin and live in some random European city. The idea of understanding the world in its localities has always been part of migrant communities.

I am interested in seeing on which level we can work on a continental theoretical framework around that local in-betweenness that is European. On a more personal note, I keep going back to this idea that we do not understand yet in which way Black- and Brownness is also European, but that we need to find this out.

HRH: The Rijksmuseum Amsterdam had a temporary exhibition about eight Afro-Surinamese historical people. Is the Rijksmuseum's work with the Afro-Surinamese history exhibition a first step into the direction of your vision? And what is missing here according to your vision?

CL: The Rijksmuseum has the function to tell us who we are, or how we came to be. They tell us our history, thus the exhibition about the history of Dutch-involved slavery. And they should. The Stedelijk Museum, on the other hand, is the one who tells us who we could be. We create the future in the Stedelijk Museum, so for my job, I have to ask: What is the framework for the artists here? What are their words? What concepts are we putting forward with these artists? What kind of theoretical frameworks can be built that justify our acquisitions? To do this, we have to see what is going on in society.

JL: Speaking of seeing what is going on in society: At Stedelijk Museum you have recently launched *Szine* which, as you describe, aims "to create a different awareness relating to the Stedelijk's approach to aesthetic, ethical and social issues inside, and outside, the museum walls."[6] The zine is available both as a print copy and online for free. In addition, the museum's *Stedelijk Studies* is in the process of

6 "Stedelijk closes 125th anniversary with launch of Szine, a publication presenting new research," https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/news/stedelijk-closes-125th-anniversary-launch-szine, *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*, 19 January 2022 (7 February 2023).

developing from a peer-reviewed journal to a broader knowledge sharing platform. How can and should art, and thinking and writing about art, especially when speaking to experiences and histories of migration, reach out into the world?

CL: I am not sure that in my role at the museum it is my personal responsibility to speak to experiences and histories of migration. What I can do is actively encourage the museum to evaluate the role of art and art theory development in an ever-evolving environment in which histories of migration play an important role. Through the *Szine* we elaborate on the museum's subjective position as a gatekeeper in that process. Through *Stedelijk Studies Journal* we engage artist and scholars from many different backgrounds with a preference for the speculative. What we try to do there is open up the idea of academic peer-review to artistic practices while at the same time offering compensations that might engage a different group of contributors than tenured professors. Within the *Stedelijk Studies* platform, curators and conservators are encouraged to share their research. Share the stuff that did not make it into the exhibition or that got forgotten in the collection. As a museum we are actively engaged with the collection to bring to the fore artist that were not seen before and played an important role in the development of the art scene. Those artists are often artists with a migration background. We are also developing a curatorial and acquisition method that is based on the idea of diaspora and moves away from the idea of regionality. I think this last point is our way of reaching out into the world.

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Figures

Hayriye Kapusuz

Chapter 3
"Migrating Reflections" on *Misafir* (2017)

Introduction

Compared to the cinematic exploration of migration in Turkish cinema since the 1950s, which is historically related to the wave of internal migration from the villages of Anatolia to the urban centres of Turkey or the German-Turkish labour migration, the number of films on the Syrian civil war is still quite modest. Since the outbreak of the war in Syria, Turkey has been a key refugee-hosting country and country of transit for refugees. In 2020, Turkey was the country that hosted the largest refugee population.[1] Syrian refugees have been granted temporary protection since 2014, giving them access to education, medical care, jobs and housing. However, unregistered refugees in Turkey are not eligible for benefits (including access to health, education, social assistance, or work permit).[2] Unlike the EU's migration and asylum policies, there is no time limit for temporary protection in Turkey. Accordingly, the proposal of the Ministry of Interior to terminate temporary protection can be approved by the Council of Ministers at any time.[3]

Turkish films on the Syrian civil war focus on the effects of these regulations, social change, and the attitude of the Turkish society towards refugees. A brief overview of the genre-specific and content-related characteristics of the Turkish-language feature films on the Syrian civil war demonstrates the focus of filmic narratives, whereby a certain motif – namely the change in awareness of the Turkish characters regarding the "refugee problem" – recur both in the early and recent films such as in *Fedakar* (*Altruist*, dir. Hüseyin Eleman, 2011), *Hayat Çizgisi Suriye* (*Lifeline: Syria*, dir. Caner Erzincan, 2016) and *Omar ve Biz* (*Omar and Us*,

1 According to the latest data announced by the Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association, the number of registered Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey is 3.736.737. Cf. "Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Sayısı Ocak 2023," https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi/ (15 February 2022).

2 Cf. "Registration with the Turkish authorities," UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/information-for-syrians/reception-and-registration-with-the-turkish-authorities/ (15 February 2022).

3 Oktay Durukan, "Söyleşi," *saha* 2 (2016), 21.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-003

dir. Mehmet Bahadır Er and Maryna Er Gorbach 2019).[4] Through the encounter with the refugee, self-reflection takes place through which Turkish characters become aware of their prejudices against refugees. With the journey from Turkey to Syria (in *Hayat Çizgisi Suriye* the protagonist travels to Gaziantep) or the escape from Syria to Turkey (*Omar ve Biz*), the encounter becomes a kind of self-reflection through which one's own position is questioned and the refugee is acknowledged. Through this encounter, the characters change from irresponsible (Murat in *Fedakar*), prejudiced (İsmet in *Omar ve Biz*) or apolitical (Doğan in *Hayat Çizgisi Suriye*) to responsible and conscientious people. In comparison to these films, *Terkedilmiş* (*The Abandoned*, dir. Korhan Uğur, 2015) and *Daha* (*More*, dir. Onur Saylak, 2017), combining elements of drama and crime, focus on the effects of the war on Syrian refugees, such as poverty, the illegal organ trade and human smuggling.[5] *Kardeşim İçin Der'a* (*Daraa for My Broher*, dir. Murat Onbul, 2018), on the other hand, mixes action and historical drama elements to depict the struggle of the protagonist, an opponent of the Assad regime. The historical-political background of the Syrian civil war is brought to the forefront of the narrative. Compared to the films mentioned above, *Misafir* (*The Guest: Aleppo to Istanbul*, directed by Andaç Haznedaroğlu, 2017), which is discussed in more detail here through the analysis of a still image, focuses on the protagonists' experiences of flight and living conditions in Turkey.

While Turkish films about Syrian refugees' lives revolve around the themes of refugees' spatial and racialised experiences, discourse analyses primarily examine forms of representation.[6] These analyses explore how refugees and migrants are often portrayed as victims (e.g. of human trafficking), which is a recurring representational construction in both cinematic and public discourse.[7] Cinematic representations of displacement and (forced) migration refer, on the one hand, to the

4 *Fedakar*, directed by Hüseyin Eleman, (Katarsis & tunatoon, 2011). *Hayat Çizgisi Suriye*, directed by Caner Erzincan (Üsküdar Yapım, 2016). *Omar ve Biz*, directed by Mehmet Bahadır Er and Maryna Er Gorbach (Protim V.B., 2019).

5 *Terkedilmiş*, directed by Korhan Uğur (Saygın Film, 2015). *Daha*, directed by Onur Saylak (Ay Yapım & b.i.t arts, 2017).

6 See, for example, Sezer A. Kına and Mehmet Işık, "Türk Sinema Filmlerinin Afişlerinde Suriyeli Mülteciler Krizinin Temsili," *The Global Refugee and Migration Congress* (Gaziantep: Gaziantep University Press, 2019), 22–31; Muhammed E. Toy and Şükrü Sim, "Türk Sinemasında Suriyeli Mülteciler: 'Kardeşim İçin Dera Filmi' Üzerinden Suriyeli Mültecilerin Mağduriyet Temsili," *İletişim Çalışmaları Dergisi* 7.1 (2021): 49–92; Eren Yüksel, "Daha ve Misafir Filmlerinde Mültecilere Yönelik Dışlama Pratikleri ve Yok-Yerler," *ilef* 6.2 (2019): 227–250.

7 Ipek A. Celik, *In Permanent Crisis. Ethnicity in Contemporary European Media and Cinema* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015). See also Sabine Bauer-Amin, *Resisting the Current Refugee Discourse*: *Between Victimization and Reclaiming Agency* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of

political context and discourses around migration and thus reproduce or reinforce existing knowledge (such as a "victim discourse"); on the other hand, different media forms reshape representations and knowledge about migrants and refugees. An important task and challenge for our own knowledge production remains the uncovering of medially constructed "migration realities" or artistic imaginaries of migration and flight, which – just like our scholarly practice and perspective – are product and part of hegemonic thinking, but which we (should) always try to deconstruct. A number of analyses of the media representation of migrants and refugees have already focused on attempts at different media forms that go beyond traditional and conventional aesthetic forms of representation and develop new visual and acoustic strategies for representing the experiences of migrants and refugees.[8] These shifts in modes of artistic and media representations also thereby simultaneously shift hegemonic discourse, imaginaries and understandings of migration realities and influence the dissemination of knowledge about migration. In other words, aesthetic procedures can elicit emotions and confusions that deconstruct existing perceptions and knowledge structures and systems, and furthermore form discourses in the first place. Films also participate in discourses and are shaped by them.[9] An aesthetic thinking problematises the equation of concept and knowledge, the appropriation of thinking by language and turns to thinking in other media such as images or musical compositions as reality-generating epistemic arts.[10] For the image as a medium that creates meaning, this means that it possesses a peculiarity with regard to its principles of construction and its associated perception, which is clearly separated from language. The differences to language arise in the forms of making visible, rendering invisible, splitting of the gaze, or mediality of the image, as well as in the act of seeing or perceiving the images, whereby art shows, reveals, and unveils something different and in a different way.[11] Therefore, it is not primarily about the exploration of a knowledge in the classical sense, which is stated as "right," "wrong," or generally valid, but about aesthetic practices of paradoxalisation, indeterminacies and singularities.[12] For work with and through film, this means not only orienting oneself to content, texts, discourses, adapting them to the

Sciences Press, 2017), 127–128; Jim Pines, *British Cinema and Black Representation* (British Film Institute: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009); Alex Lykidis, "Minority and Immigrant Representation in Recent European Cinema," *Spectator* 29.1 (2009), 37.

8 See for example Deniz Bayrakdar and Robert Burgoyne, eds., *Refugees and Migrants in Contemporary Film, Art and Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

9 Thomas Wiedemann, *Die Diskursanalyse als Verfahren einer sozialwissenschaftlichen Filmanalyse* (Wiesbaden: Springer Verlag, 2017), 179.

10 Dieter Mersch, *Epistemologien des Ästhetischen* (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2015), 8–9.

11 Mersch, *Epistemologien des Ästhetischen*, 17.

12 Mersch, *Epistemologien des Ästhetischen*, 147.

specific logic of the film or assigning cinematic strategies to discursive formations, but rather dedicating oneself to film-aesthetic practices which open up new perspectives and allow other modes of perception and forms of knowledge to emerge.

Between discursive and aesthetic thinking, this paper analyzes the film *Misafir*, with particular attention to the construction of image space in the selected still image. Thus, it is primarily about the analysis of the image's inherent properties, its construction strategies and in turn generated modes of perception, whose interpretive possibilities go beyond an a priori formulated "reality" or discursive representations of migrants as victims. To be more precise, it is about a particular moment, a paradoxical intervention, which is produced by the spatial arrangements and which contradicts the prevailing discursive representation of refugees as victims in the film and its regime of truth. However, the moments of rupture and singularity of the aesthetic/filmic only emerge through the reference to the general, which requires "thinking in images" and concepts/discourses. In other words, the singularity of the aesthetic operation and, in turn, evoked cognition cannot be entirely described and recognised as new without relating it to something already known.[13] In the still image, through the strategy of arranging the figures in the image space, this hegemonic discourse and perception about migration and flight is deconstructed.

Misafir: Guest, Occupant or Returner?

Misafir tells the story of the eight-year-old girl Lina (Rawan Iskeif), who lost her family in an air raid in Syria and is therefore forced to flee the war together with her little sister and neighbour Meryem (Saba Mubarak), who takes care of the siblings. With Lina's desire to return to Aleppo and Meryem's hope to start a new life in Europe, they first reach Turkey together with other Syrian refugees to flee from there across the Mediterranean to Europe. The film focuses on the life struggle of refugees in Istanbul, which is linked to experiences of exclusion, exploitation, legal and social obstacles. The story of *Misafir* is based on a personal story of director Andaç Haznedaroğlu, which she recreates with the character of Zeynep (Şebnem Dönmez) who offers her help and hospitality to Lina. The starting point for the filmmaker was an encounter with a Syrian girl who knocked on the window of her car to ask for help for her sick sister. After deciding to drive her to the hospital, medical care was provided after four hospital visits, as refugees without papers are not admitted. This experience of the filmmaker is the starting point of the

13 Mersch, *Epistemologien des Ästhetischen*, 192.

film. After the event, she traveled to the southern Turkish border towns to actively participate in humanitarian aid for refugees from Syria. The script is largely based on her observations and conversations with the refugees during her stay in the refugee camps. The film portrays the dangerous flight from Syria to Istanbul and the living conditions in Istanbul mainly from the perspective of women. At some points the boundaries between documentary and fiction become blurred, particularly due to the close proximity of the camera to the protagonists and the use of the hand-held camera. The influence of social realist film on her understanding of film and her goal of producing films that deal with the stories of the time[14] can be seen, for example, in her choice of locations and actors. According to the filmmaker, the film was realised mostly with amateur actors. For the character of Lina, Syrian Arabic was crucial for the director, which is why casting took about 1.5 years. Rawan Iskeif, whom the director met in the refugee camp and chose for the role of Lina, now lives in Germany with her mother. According to the filmmaker, the production process took a total of 4 years.[15]

Arrangement of the Image Space

Fig. 1: Lina at Zeynep's place, *Misafir*. Dir. Andaç Haznedaroğlu. Andaç Film, IFP, ID, 2017. Image courtesy of Andaç Haznedaroğlu.

14 Sezer A. Kına, "Mülteciler ve Sinema: Andaç Haznedaroğlu ile *Misafir* Üzerine Bir Görüşme," *ARTS: Artuklu Journal for Arts and Humanities* 1 (2019): 80.
15 Sezer A. Kına, "Mülteciler ve Sinema," 81.

The still image from the film *Misafir* follows the hospital scene in which Zeynep and Lina are waiting for medical care for Linas' sister. This is the only scene in Zeynep's house that brings Lina together with Zeynep and her two sons in the frame. In this *misè en scene*, the characters are spatially arranged in a way that opposites such as inside/outside, foreign/native, present/past or present/absence, distance/closeness are visually produced and at the same time deconstructed. These contrasts are created by positioning Lina in the background of the image in comparison to Zeynep and her sons. The spatial positioning of the figures can therefore be understood as representing and reproducing the socio-economic status of the figures as well as the unequally distributed power relations. In her work, Schaffer problematises the causal connection – especially in oppositional political debates – between (more) visibility and political power, that assumes and overlooks "the complex processes in the field of visuality, for which it is highly relevant who gives to be seen, in which context – and above all: how, i.e., in which form and structure to be seen."[16] Schaffer points out that "making visible" has a positive connotation for left-wing activist and minorities, but that visibility is never a given, but is always produced by knowledge and power. Based on analyses of different visual media, Schaffer argues that despite attempts to make minorities visible, differences and stereotyping are reproduced or, conversely, that by citing hegemonic forms, shifts in dominant relations can arise and oppositional statements are dependent on a dominant order of representation. In the selected still image, the spatial arrangement of the figures first challenges us to rethink our understanding of visibility and invisibility. I will attempt to explore the dialectic of visibility through the analysis of the spatial arrangement of the refugee figure Lina. As I will try to show, the arrangement of the figures creates a space for the "return of the repressed" but withdraw the power of action.

In the still image, the camera is positioned frontally and at a slightly lower angle so that we see Zeynep in the foreground of the frame and her sons sitting in front of the computer in a medium close-up. Lina, on the other hand, turning the globe table lamp, can be seen in the background in a medium long shot. The image space is clearly divided between front and background. Despite this at first glance hierarchical arrangement of the figures, the aesthetic and the discursive cannot be explained in a causal relationship. Zeynep and her sons are in the foreground and therefore visible. Lina, on the other hand, who is in the background, has more space and view. The moment the viewers' attention is drawn to the house owners

16 Johanna Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit: Über die visuellen Strukturen der Anerkennung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 12.

or "hosts" positioned in the foreground, a shift of attention as well as meaning is effected simultaneously with the perception of Lina, who has been positioned in the background but right in the centre of the image space. Zeynep and her sons stand side by side, whereas the blurred refugee figure in the background is ascribed a distance from the characters as well as loneliness. However, this is also deconstructed by Lina's positioning between the two boys. The creation of distance between the figures on the vertical axis is balanced by Lina's positioning in the right half of the picture and exactly in the gap between the two boys. This shifts the boundaries between inside and outside, distance and closeness. Whenever Lina is ascribed an inconspicuousness or passivity in space, she demands and calls for visibility and space. But this visibility occurs in a subtle and subversive form at the same time, which I would like to describe as *ghostly*, following Saybaşılı's analyses of migratory movements in visual culture.[17] In her work, analyzing audiovisual media on migration and flight with Derrida's[18] concept of *hauntology* and *spectre* she describes subjectivity as something that is only produced at and through borders and boundaries. By analysing art practices and cultural representations, she explores the impact of migration on the one hand and its perception on the other. Instead of focusing exclusively on mapping migrants' routes of movement, strategies that can reveal the common patterns of displacement and migration are explored. According to Saybaşılı:

> the concept of the ghost emerges as a strategic tool that connects the past and the present, existence and non-existence, the presence and the absence, the visible and the invisible, the near and the far, the abstract and the concrete.[19]

Following Derrida's reflections on *spectral truth*,[20] Saybaşılı uses the concept of ghost in the context of displacement and migration, to reveal *spectral truths* such as power relations and the effects of globalisation, to understand border crossing experiences as well as the living conditions in border areas and cities. On the other hand, based on the instability and unfixability of reality according to the concept of spectre, it is used to show that haunting is an active action against the existing

17 Nermin Saybaşılı, *Sınırlar ve Hayaletler: Görsel Kültürde Göç Hareketleri* (Istanbul: Metis, 2011). Title translation: *Borders and Ghosts: Migration Flows in Visual Culture*.

18 Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994).

19 Saybaşılı, *Sınırlar ve Hayaletler*, 13–14. My own translation. Original: "'hayalet' mefhumu, geçmişle bugünü, canlıyla cansızı, mevcudiyetle namevcudiyeti, görünenle görünmeyeni, yakınla uzağı, soyutla somutu birbirine bağlamaya yarayan stratejik bir araç olarak ortaya çıkıyor."

20 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

political and social structures, which leads these structures into crisis. The focus on haunting is rather understood as an (ethical) procedure, starting point and attempt that draws attention to the importance of searching for traces of invisible history, occurrence, and people. Gordon's definition of "ghost," that "is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life,"[21] also makes this starting point clear. Based on the concept of hauntology and ghost as a research approach and at the same time as a social figure, Saybaşılı describes the migrant, refugee, or political asylum seeker as a ghost figure that inspires us to rethink the concepts of home and homeland. These groups have been neglected and forgotten, which makes them ghostly.

In the still image described, the arrangement of the figures invites the viewer to confront precisely this complexity of the phenomenon of migration and flight. In order to find a solution to their situation, the refugee characters are at the mercy and pity of an upper-middle class Turkish woman, through which their status is reduced to passive and in need of protection, which also stabilises this recurring representation in the films. This is established at first glance with the spatial arrangement of the figures. The socio-economic status of the characters, the passive victim role of Lina, the active helper role of Zeynep, the status of the host and the guest as well as the anchoring of their minds to the present or past moment (symbolically represented with the globus table lamp) is visually reproduced with the division of the image space (front and back). Lina's inconspicuousness, however, also contains a moment that overrides this inequality. In the background but positioned in the centre of the image space, Lina appears ghostly and uncanny, which makes her present and absent, inside and outside. With this appearance she turns from an invited guest into someone who haunts the home, without an invitation, compassion and help of the host. She is not in her role as a passive refugee in need of protection, invited into the home of the locals, but she is claiming her deprived home, both from the Syrian regime and from the Turkish apartment owner who, in another scene, has thrown Lina, her sister Meryem, and a group of refugees onto the street. Lina not only challenges our understanding of owning a house, or the house per se, but functions as a social figure oppressed and neglected by an authoritarian regime that bombed her hometown, or by a system that allows refugees a temporary stay. Her gaze at the globe table lamp, a similar one shown in the opening scene when Lina was in Syria, connects her present with the past. She rejects the guest attribution of the Turkish Law of Immigration and border assignment by

21 Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

haunting the horizontal axis of the image space. Her inconspicuous presence and her stay in Zeynep's house reveal an invisible and uncomfortable spectral truth. The aesthetic and narrative characteristics of *Misafir* are reminiscent of the films of Italian neorealism, which are characterised by their "claim to reality conveyed through a clear and transparent narrative."[22] Like the films of Italian neorealism, *Misafir* is interested in social reality and the representation of people's living conditions. The upper-class character Zeynep, who experiences a change in awareness through her encounter with Lina, demands ethical behavior from the viewer. But this empathetic gesture at the same time reproduces and stabilises the status and the existing power relationship (passive and victimised refugee/solicitous Turk) on the one hand and leads to a blinding of the situation of minorities in Istanbul on the other. Zeynep's responsible and caring role as a Turk towards the refugees is reinforced above all by her visual presence in the image space. But Zeynep first has to meet a Syrian refugee in order to experience an awareness of the situation of those confronted with displacement. The run-down refuges for Istanbul's minorities, such as the now gentrified Tarlabaşı neighborhood and the who have lived there for decades and their living conditions are thus rendered invisible. This also becomes clear in another scene in which the residents of a minority neighborhood hand over collected clothes to Meryem. The moral attitude, helpfulness and mercy of Zeynep and the dwellers of the slum district is pushed so far that the foreignness attributed to minorities living in Istanbul for decades is shifted to the Syrian refugees.

Paradoxes of Visibility

As various film and media analyses have already shown, neither a causal connection between visibility and (political) power can be assumed,[23] nor can stereotypical portrayals be denied the potential to shift dominant relations.[24] Aesthetic

22 Francesco Casetti, "Der Stil als Schauplatz der Verhandlung. Überlegungen zu filmischem Realismus und Neo-Realismus," *montage AV* 18.1 (2009): 131.

23 See Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 11; Ömer Alkin and Hayriye Kapusuz, "Das Migrationsdrama *Das deutsche Kind* (NDR, 2017): Geschichte, Filmographie und Analyse deutsch-türkischer TV-Produktionen," *Zeitschrift Rundfunk und Geschichte* (2017): 27–54.

24 Ömer Alkin, "Errettung der äußeren Migrationswirklichkeit durch den Film: Eine polyzentrisch-ästhetische Analyse familialer Tableaus in den Ehrenmorddramen *Die Fremde* (D, 2010) und *Die Blüte der Jahreszeit* (TR, 2012)." *Ege Forschungen zur deutschen Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* 12.2 (2018): 1–39.

variables can simultaneously shift and deconstruct the "topos of visibility," understood as the "a place of generality, of prevailing opinion."[25] In his essay "Moving Peoples and Motion Pictures: Migration in Film and Other Media," Dudley Andrew[26] addresses the question of whether cinema is capable of reproducing, capturing or imagining such a complex phenomenon as migration, through images and sounds. Through his examination of different forms of media representation and practices of imagining migration, it becomes clear to the reader that Andrew is more concerned with the form of showing and making visible than with questioning the possibility of representation at all. For Andrew, it is about finding a "visual rhetoric" that demands more than our empathy. Rather, it should be about a visual strategy that encourages active participation as well as critical engagement:

> Why not admit it: in the case of the greatest social drama of our world today, there may be limits to what can be represented on-screen. I say this despite the existence of ubiquitous news releases and hours of moving-image reportage online and on television. Cinema, which I align with the arts, needs not just to present what is discoverable, as all image documentation does; it should coordinate images into perspectives and points of view. This distinction is akin to the tradition that sets newsreels apart from documentaries, not to mention from fiction films based on genuine situations, including those that sometimes incorporate actual footage.[27]

Misafir succeeds in a sensitive and realistic portrayal of flight, bureaucratic and language barriers, psychological burdens, material hardships and the prejudices of (Turkish) society. In this way, the film encourages the viewer's empathy and leads to the questioning of social inequality and migration policies. On the other hand, it also reproduces the current refugee discourse. Except for a few scenes in which, for example, Syrian women talk about cosmetics or children play in the park, the film is dominated by images in which the protagonists are portrayed as victims of unbearable conditions or dependent on the help and support of the privileged. That it corresponds to reality and that these conditions are daily reality for a large number of refugees and therefore must be made visible in the media is beyond question. Rather, it should be about problematising these recurring representative constructions and their implications, such as the assumption

25 Schaffer, *Ambivalenzen der Sichtbarkeit*, 11.

26 Dudley Andrew, "Moving Peoples and Motion Pictures: Migration in Film and Other Media," In *Refugees and Migrants in Contemporary Film. Art and Media*. Eds. Deniz Bayrakdar and Robert Burgoyne (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022).

27 Andrew, "Moving Peoples and Motion Pictures," 34.

and labelling of refugees as a homogeneous victim group[28] on the one hand and the portrayal of the host society with prejudices against refugees or as their saviours on the other.

In this respect, *Misafir* not only reproduces a hegemonic discourse, but also the trope of "guest worker" cinema in the Turkish-migrant context and German-Turkish film culture. These are especially the German films of the 1970s and 1980s which Nanna Heidenreich calls "problem films" and characterises with a "humanist-pedagogical impulse" and "subnational pity culture."[29] As Ömer Alkin notes in his analyses, the cinematic negotiation of migrant issues in German cinema reproduces still similar imaginaries of migration and migrants that orientalise and victimise migrants.[30] Just as in these films a German saviour faces a Turkish oppressor and offers the woman his help, in *Misafir* Zeynep makes herself available for the vulnerable Lina. Hence, a transfer of the recurring representation of the "victimised migrant" of Turkish-German cinema, whose emergence can be traced back to the labour migration of Turks to Germany since the 1960s can be detected. The depiction of Turkish migrants in German-Turkish cinema as "pitiable" migrants and the implicit discourse on the superiority of the West is adopted in Turkish cinema.

In the surplus of the victimising representation of the refugee figures, however, a counter-representation is produced at the same time, or a reading is made possible that deconstructs the dominant logic of representation in the film. The spatial arrangement in the analysed still image activate a reading and interpretation of the refugee figure that goes beyond the hegemonic understanding of a resigned, isolated, and victimised migrant.[31] The continuous presence of the refugee characters in the film and the simultaneous withdrawal of their visibility enables a different way of seeing and thinking about the phenomenon of flight. This relationship can be seen in the centrality of the figures in the narration and images and their positioning on the periphery or in the background of the image space. The viewer's perception is challenged by the unobtrusive presence of the refugee figures. Meaning cannot be

28 Ulrike, Krause, "'It Seems You Don't Have Identity, You Don't Belong.' Reflexionen über das Flüchtlingslabel und dessen Implikationen," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 23.1 (2016): 8–9.

29 Nanna Heidenreich, *V/Erkennungsdienste, das Kino und die Perspektive der Migration* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015), 19.

30 Ömer Alkin, "Re-writing Turkish-German Cinema from the bottom-up: Turkish Emigration Cinema," in *Turkish Migration, Identity and Integration*, eds. Ibrahim Sirkeci, Betül Dilara Şeker and Ali Çağlar (London: Transnational Press, 2015), 125–127.

31 For an exemplary discussion of the relationship between the arrangement of the figures and image space, see Guido Kirsten, *Figuren im filmischen Raum. Anthropozentrische Anordnungen, stilisiertes Staging und realistische Rückseiten* (Marburg: Schüren, 2012), 294.

created exclusively with the inclusion or exclusion of the figures in the image space. The representation itself becomes questionable. Yet it is precisely the contradictory nature of the representation and the visual reproduction of the hegemonic discourse that allow for a contrapuntal reading. In this spatial arrangement, in which she recedes into the background of the image space but claims the centrality of the space for herself, Lina is ascribed uncanny presence that functions as a subtle revolt against the marking of subjectivity and space, and with which she resists the labelling ascribed to her as a "guest." In this spatial arrangement, she appears neither as a guest nor as a displaced person. Rather, she appears as a ghostly intruder who resists the temporary residence permit of a host country and the forced expulsion by a regime. This also shifts the meaning of a territorially bounded and determined space. This simultaneously reveals another invisibility: the mystification of local unequal power relations. Both the character Zeynep, who belongs to the upper middle class, and the woman who lives on the outskirts of the city, represent the morality of Turkish society in *Misafir* by offering their help to Lina and Meryem. However, the class difference and social inequality in Turkish society is hidden by this same moral stance of both women. In order to develop an awareness and responsibility for the refugees' situation, Zeynep first has to meet Lina, which leads to the ignoring of the minorities who have lived in Istanbul for centuries and their living conditions. This is reinforced as the woman living in a minority quarter becomes a helper. Lina's inconspicuous visibility therefore also functions as a ghost of the past, a trace of a hidden "political archive" that exposes Turkey's minority politics and makes visible its continuation.

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Fig. 1: Lina at Zeynep's place, *Misafir*. Dir. Andaç Haznedaroğlu. Andaç Film, IFP, ID, 2017. Image courtesy of Andaç Haznedaroğlu.

Mahmoud Arghavan

Chapter 4
Global Warming and Climate Refugees: Facts, "Alternative Facts" and the State of Emergency

Introduction

"The twenty-first century will be the century of the migrant"[1] has by now become an overused, universally accepted statement, and yet, at its core, it remains significant. Directly man-made crises such as war, political turmoil, and ethnic cleansing have been framed as the leading causes of displacement and asylum seeking. However, the environmentally caused displacements of climate migrants or climate refugees from regions in the Global South have resonated less with officials and authorities,[2] as Eve Andrews has shown:

> The Institute for Economics and Peace, an Australian think tank, recently estimated that in 2017 alone, 18 million people – 61.5 percent of global displacements – were forced to move due to natural disasters. [. . .] That same report noted that nearly 1 billion people currently live in areas of "very high" or "high" climate exposure, which could result in millions of people displaced by climate change in the future. [. . .] But, if we're talking about legally designated "climate refugees," there's a much different number being thrown around: zero.[3]

These numbers stand in sharp contrast to one another, especially given the fact that a 2018 World Bank report warned that "we're on track for a 4 °C warmer world (by the end of the twenty-first century) marked by extreme heat waves, declining global food stocks, loss of ecosystem and biodiversity, and life-threatening

1 Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2015), 1.

2 Cf. Steven Goodbred's work on *Environmental Stress and Human Migration in a Low-lying Developing Nation: A Comparison of Co-evolving Natural and Human Landscapes in the Physically and Culturally Diverse Context of Bangladesh* (Columbia University, 2012); and Matthew Walsham, *Assessing the Evidence: Environment, Climate Change and Migration in Bangladesh* (International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2010). The framing of "climate migration" or the "climate refugee" is of course a highly contested one – see, for example, Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus, "The first climate refugees? Contesting global narratives of climate change in Tuvalu," *Global Environmental Change* 22.2 (2012): 382–390, for a discussion of this.

3 Eve Andrews, "What is a 'climate refugee' and how many are there?" https://grist.org/article/climate-refugee-number-definition/, *Grist*, 20 June 2019 (20 January 2022).

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[global] sea level rise [by 1 or possibly 2 meters by 2100]."[4] As Naomi Klein argues in her incisive 2015 book on *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, this would drown some island nations and inundate many coastal areas resulting in mass displacements of their inhabitants and potential geopolitical clashes over scarcity of resources and resettlement of climate refugees.[5]

Bearing in mind that the climate crisis as a result of cumulative greenhouse gas emissions is indeed anthropogenic, this paper attempts to pose a political, activist intervention in current discourses about how to imagine and know (about) contemporary migration movements, by discussing contrasting views of the causes and effects of global warming on our lives and socio-political world. While scientists and climate activists warn us about the destructive effects of global warming, right-wingers in the industrialized West respond either with climate change denial or acknowledge the veracity of climate change, but instrumentalize this knowledge for their political goals of excluding others from the U.S., Germany, etc. The conservative media propagate misinformation about climate change and biased images of refugees and migrants. The alt-right uses "alternative facts" to either deny global warming or to admit it while finding underdeveloped countries and poor nations guilty for the global warming. The right-wing conservationism and localism tie the protection of nature from pollution and green gas emissions to protecting the nation from migrant population. Therefore, I argue that it is necessary to view global migration and 'refugee crises' through an ecocritical lens to discuss these different regimes of truth about migration from the Global South by taking into account the significance of climate change, sustainable development, and environmentalist programs for our negotiations of borders, boundaries, and sovereignty.

Each of the two competing fronts of "climate justice" and "climate denial" employ the power of media representations and cultural productions to support their arguments and influence their audiences' ways of knowing migrants.[6] Global warming and climate refugees have been represented more pervasively in documentaries, reportages and social media than in literature and feature films. On the one hand, independent documentary filmmakers try to educate and warn the public and politicians about the catastrophic consequences of climate change for our lives as individual and collective inhabitants of the planet earth. *An Inconvenient Truth* by Davis Guggenheim (2006), *Climate Refugees* by Michael Nash (2010), *The Condor and the Eagle* by Sophie Guerra and Clément Guerra (2019) and *Before the*

4 Quoted in Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 13.

5 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 13.

6 Cf. Benedetta Brevini and Justin Lewis, eds., *Climate Change and the Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018).

Flood by Fisher Stevens (2016), among others, are important documentaries in this genre.[7] On the other hand, conservative politicians and alt-right activists use their social and digital media[8] to propagate what I call "alternative facts" and "fake news" to deny climate change or instrumentalize it to advance their nationalist and white supremacist agenda. Documentaries such as *Climate Hustle* by Marc Morano (2016), is one among other few films about climate denial.[9] This tension points towards the different ways media, online and offline, can be used to negotiate public awareness of migration – in this case climate migration and refugeehood. In the following considerations, I will first outline the emergence of and interlocking complexities of right-wing violence in the face of globalization and migration, before linking them to re-birth of eco-fascism and white-nationalist environmentalism which constitutes another right-wing response to global warming.

Global Warming and the Alt-Right

A closer look through the lens of the environmental humanities at some recent instances of military conflict and extremism, from religious extremism in the Middle East to right-wing extremism in Europe and the US, will uncover the role of environmental stressors in catalysing the transformation of cultural and religious prejudices into military confrontations and the "clash of civilizations," with devastating consequences for human lives and the natural world.

Considering the emergence of ISIS in Syria and Iraq historically reveals the role of a four-year drought which afflicted Syria from 2006 through 2010, affected sixty percent of Syria's land and devastated the livelihoods of eight hundred

7 Cf. *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by David Guggenheim (Paramount, 2006); *Climate Refugees*, directed by Michael P. Nash (Netflix, 2010); *The Condor and the Eagle*, directed by Sophie Guerra and Clement Guerra (2019); *Before the Flood*, directed by Fisher Stevens, (National Geographic, 2016). For an extensive discussion about such media see, Mark Terry's *The Geo-Doc: Geomedia, Documentary Film, and Social Change* (Cham: Palgrave, 2020), which outlines the influential power of the documentary film as an agent of social change. A focus on specific documentaries, while indeed necessary and pertinent, goes beyond the scope of this chapter which attempts to illuminate some of the theoretical and socio-political contexts of knowledge creation about climate migration.

8 As Mike Wendling outlines, the most notably media of the alt-right are "Breitbart [News Network], the /pol/ section of 4chan[1], numerous accounts on Twitter, popular Reddit forums and YouTube accounts, and niche websites [such as neo-Nazi website Stormfront]." Mike Wendling, *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (Pluto Press 2018), 3.

9 Cf. *Climate Hustle*, directed by Christopher Rogers, narrated and written by Marc Morano (Fathom Events, 2016).

thousand farmers and herders which eventually knocked two to three million people into extreme poverty and displacements.[10] Having evoked little response from Bashar al-Assad's regime, this led many to become climate refugees, abandoning their homes to forge settlements on the outskirts of big cities such as Daraa where the protests in 2011 began and sparked the popular uprising. In the ensuing chaos, Islamist extremists invested in ethno-religious differences in Syria to fuel rage at the regime and proclaim a caliphate in June 2011.[11] Due to this and other geopolitical considerations, the Pentagon in its 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review included the effects of climate change as "threat multipliers,"[12] enabling terrorism and other violence by aggravating underlying societal problems.

Even though emissions are rising so rapidly that unless something radical changes within our capitalist economic structure and consumerist lifestyle, a 4 °C warmer world now looks like a utopian dream. The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and Energy Secretary, Rick Perry, in the 2019 *Arctic Circle Assembly*, dared to celebrate global warming for its role in accelerating shrinking the levels of sea ice in the Arctic, which will presumably unveil one-third of the world's undiscovered oil and gas reserves. According to Pompeo, "[s]teady reductions in sea ice are opening new passageways for trade between Asia and the West which will potentially take 20 days."[13] As Naomi Klein explains: "Pompeo represents the extractive capitalist system which is clearly at war with our planetary systems."[14] Trump's denial of climate change and his theory about the dangers of emissions of greenhouse gases as EU and Chinese conspiracy against the U.S. resulted in the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord and replaced Obama's Clean Power Plan with Affordable Clean Energy. Trump's administration celebrated melting glaciers, hoping to uncover new fossil fuel resources from which the US can profit. As a report of the *US Global Change Research Program* shows, however, the fact is that "the loss of sea ice leads to warmer global water temperatures, which in return lead to greater sea ice melting."[15] According to Klein "[t]his will result in up to 2 meters

10 Charles B. Stroizer and Kelly A Berkell, "How Climate Change Helped ISIS," https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-climate-change-helped_b_5903170, *Huffpost*, 29 November 2014 (23 January 2022).

11 Stroizer and Berkell, "How Climate Change Helped ISIS."

12 Stroizer and Berkell, "How Climate Change Helped ISIS."

13 Amy Russo, "Mike Pompeo Says Melting Sea Ice Opens 'New Passageways' For Trade," https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mike-pompeo-global-warming-arctic-ice-trade_n_5cd08824e4b0e4d75736ba9e, *Huffpost*, 6 May 2019 (22 January 2022).

14 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 21.

15 Quoted in Jennifer Hansler, "Pompeo: Melting sea ice presents 'new opportunities for trade,'" https://edition.cnn.com/2019/05/06/politics/pompeo-sea-ice-arctic-council/index.html, *CNN*, 7 May 2019 (16 December 2021).

rise in the sea level which will eventually sink many of the islands and coastal cities not only in the third world but also in the US, Japan, EU countries and South America as well and dislocates several millions of people."[16]

Climate science denial is one side of the rightwing reaction to global warming. Serious negotiations about the necessity of radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions coincided with the dawn of the globalization era in 1988 with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the US and Canada with the later inclusion of Mexico. Ever since, the "market fundamentalism" of the corporate globalization process has been sabotaging our collective response to climate change.[17] Leonardo DiCaprio in the documentary *Before the Flood* interviews Michael E. Mann, a distinguished climate scientist. Mann explains that "we can't get a climate bill passed through our Congress because it's controlled by fossil fuel funded climate change deniers who are blocking any bills that would attempt to deal with this problem."[18] This libertarian-capitalist ideology behind what I call a hypocritical globalization in search of maximizing profit through free trade and opening new markets is largely responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and the displacement of climate refugee.

Globalization has proven to be a hypocritical project because it promised a borderless and integrated 'global village.' But in reality, it only "facilitated the free flow of goods and currencies" for transnational corporations and social elites, while restricting many "people's freedom of movement"[19] beyond national borders. For the neoliberal regime of border control grants Blue Cards or Green Cards to those skilled workers and professional migrants who can produce profit for the global capitalist system and sends off the rest of migrants and refugees from the country with Red Cards.

Hypocritical globalization and "high-consumerism emissions" are the latest attacks on nature which have accelerated the pace of climate change and its destructive effects on human lives along with accelerating the speed of traveling goods across the globe. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery are other consequences of hypocritical globalization, which profits practically from the virtually free labor of Bangladeshi workers in Dhaka who have to take on low-paid, almost unpaid, jobs to survive their forced migration resulting from global warming and increasing sea levels which have eroded their lands and homes. The products produced by these internally displaced workers can freely fly across the

16 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 21.

17 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 21.

18 Steven, *Before the Flood*.

19 Patrick Hönig, "States, Borders and the State of Exception: Framing the Unauthorised Migrant in Europe," *Etnofoor* 26.1 (2014): 125.

globe to reach malls in New York and London, but *they* must sell themselves into slavery and prostitution if they want to cross any border. In this sense, the climate refugee embodies the "wasted life" of "liquid modernity" and global capitalism,[20] suffering from the effects of a problem to which they did not contribute and calling for a simultaneous preservation of humankind and of nature.

Based on current climate trends and demographic estimations, regardless of other political and economic factors, the number of attempted migrations to Europe each year will triple by the end of the century. This foreseeable forced displacement and influx of climate refugees to Europe will affect the members of the European Union economically, politically, socially, and culturally. This will challenge our conceptions of borders and boundaries, belonging and identity, sovereignty and citizenship.

Immigration from the Global South mainly from the Middle East and from African countries to Europe, and the ongoing migration from South America to the US, have repeatedly intensified media coverage of the issue of global migration and discussion around migrants. Public knowledge of migrants and migration has been mainly influenced by representations of migrants in media which largely represents the political views of the media owners. Pro-refugee media invite the public support refugee by sharing their individual stories and by showing their desperation. These media channels publish images of overpopulated rubber boats in the Mediterranean Sea packed with Middle Easterners and Africans including children who, in the best-case scenario wearing orange life-vests, make it to the seashore. In the worst-case scenario, bodies of drowned refugees floating on the sea or washed ashore are being pictured; the photograph of the death of toddler Aylan Kurdi has become iconic in this regard.[21] The alt-right media, on the other hand, concentrates on the news and "fake news" about crime rate and lawlessness among migrants and refugees. Mike Wendling in *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (2018) discusses the online platforms of the alt-right. According to him, alt-right is "an incredibly loose set of ideologies held together by what they oppose: feminism, Islam, the Black Lives Matter movement, political correctness, a fuzzy idea they call 'globalism,' and establishment politics of both the left and the right."[22] Alt-right leaders have prominently used Renaud Camus's

20 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives, Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Oxford, MA: Polity Press, 2004).

21 Cf. Mette Mortensen, "Constructing, Confirming, and Contesting Icons: The Alan Kurdi Imagery Appropriated by #humanitywashedashore, Ai Weiwei, and Charlie Hebdo," *Media, Culture & Society* 39.8 (2017): 1142–1161, which the editors of this volume also cite in their introduction.

22 Wendling, *Alt-Right*, 98.

conspiracy theory of "The Great Replacement"[23] to propose remigration, or the forced return of non-Europeans to their countries of origin. The white nationalists argue that native "white" Europeans are being subjected to a reverse-colonization by black and brown immigrants who are flooding the continent. According to this white supremacist conspiracy theory, mass non-white immigration, interracial marriage, racial integration, whites' low fertility rates and Abortion-rights are plotted by mainly Jews to substitute the white civilization with non-European people of color and complete the extinction of the white race.[24] Although there is no evidence to back up the "Great Replacement" or "the White genocide," it has developed into the foundation of the alt-right outlook and has resulted in terrorist attacks against non-white migrants and non-Christian people. In Christchurch, New Zealand, a white supremacist killed around fifty-two Muslims in two terrorist attacks on two Mosques. Before his terror acts, he had put online his seventy-two-page manifesto *The Great Replacement*, in which he outlined his incentives for his action. Drawing on Camus, he explained that white "Christian Europe is being invaded and destroyed by hordes of black and brown immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa" whose overpopulation poses the threat of extermination of white race in the white societies of Europe, North America and Australia.[25] In another terrorist attack in El Paso, the shooter wrote: "I am simply defending my country from cultural and ethnic replacement brought on by an invasion."[26]

A dystopian prospect for human survival provides white nationalists with a perfect recipe for radicalizing young right-wingers who, the narrative goes, will

23 Camus, a celebrated French novelist and the author of *Tricks* (1979), published his alarmist theory "le grand remplacement" in 2012.

24 On *great-replacement.com*, a website maintained anonymously, the introductory text declares: "The same term can be applied to many other European peoples both in Europe and abroad [. . .] where the same policy of mass immigration of non-European people poses a demographic threat. Of all the different races of people on this planet, only the European races are facing the possibility of extinction in a relatively near future." The site announces its mission as "spreading awareness" of Camus's term, which, the site's author concludes, is more palatable than a similar concept, "white genocide." A search for that phrase on YouTube yields more than fifty thousand videos. Cf. Thomas Chatterton Williams, "The French Origins of 'You Will Not Replace Us," https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/the-french-origins-of-you-will-not-replace-us, *The New Yorker*, 4 December 2017 (19 January 2022).

25 Cf. James McAuley, "How Gay Icon Renaud Camus Became the Ideologue of White Supremacy," *The Nation*, 17 June 2019, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/renaudcamus-great-replacement-brenton-tarrant/ (19 January 2022).

26 Simon Strick, *Rechte Gefühle: Affekte und Strategien des digitalen Faschismus* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021), 113.

have to fight a global race war over diminishing resources.[27] Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2008) contends that "rightwing" shock doctors exploit emergencies for their violent agendas to bring us into an era of "climate barbarism."[28] The right-extremist violent actions against migrants and refugees warn us about an unpredictable future with insecurity and violence for everybody in the world if we do not act now to slow down global warming and find solutions for the crisis we are facing. In the long-term perspective, global warming will result in scarcity of natural resources for living around the globe which will cause mass displacements of inhabitants on the coastlines, internally and across the borders, which will deepen economic crises and political instabilities in the homelands of refugees and their countries of destination. The continuance of turmoil and conflict will very likely end in declaration of a "state of emergency" around the world with suspended rights and laws to control the crisis.

This foreseeable and unavoidable state of emergency entails renegotiating our understanding of borders and sovereignty to resettle these stateless persons on the move. Borders are manifestation of three core principles of international law, namely national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. These three principles permit the states' monopolization of authority to simplify complex realities into easy binaries of "we" vs. "others" or "nationals" vs. "aliens" and control the movement of its own subjects, foreign nationals and stateless refugees.[29]

The border-crossing stateless figure of the refugee, who "votes with their feet," discredits the sovereignty of their nation-state, which had failed to protect them from natural and manmade disasters, on the one hand, and discloses the pitfalls of the triangle of territory-state-nation in the conception of human rights, on the other. Analyzing the mass movement of people following World War I and during World War II, Hannah Arendt (1951) in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* argued that the phenomenon of stateless persons, who were de facto refugees, just as refugees

27 Dawn Stover, "White nationalism's solution to climate change: fewer brown people," *The Bulletin*, 6 August 2019, https://thebulletin.org/2019/08/white-nationalisms-solution-to-climate-change-fewer-brown-people/ (19 January 2022). The mass shooter in El-Paso, Texas in his four-page manifesto declared his thesis of "cultural and ethnic replacement" through an "immigrants/Hispanics invasion of Texas." The right-wing terrorist who attacked the Christchurch Mosque, close to the Friday morning climate strike in Christchurch, also had environmental "justifications" for his xenophobia and nationalism.

28 Cf. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin Press, 2008).

29 Hönig, "States, Borders and the State of Exception," 129.

were de facto stateless, manifested the crisis of the nation state.[30] As Hönig summarizes astutely, "it was the exclusion from all legal protection, [Arendt] observed, that prompted de facto refugees to seek a life in a state of lawlessness."[31]

Climate Refugees and Eco-Fascism

Bearing in mind that immigration has been cited as one of the main factors in the success of the Brexit referendum in the UK and of the resurgence of right-wing extremist groups in Germany and France, the re-birth of eco-fascism and white-nationalist environmentalism constitutes another rightwing response to global warming. Eco-fascism combines veganism with anti-multiculturalism, calls for a racial purity with anti-single use plastic, and animal rights with anti-Semitism.[32] Marine Le Pen, the President of the National Rally political party in France, for example, argues that someone "who is rooted in their home is an ecologist," while people who are "nomadic [. . .] do not care about the environment" since "they have no homeland."[33] Italy's populist Five Star Movement is both avowedly environmentalist and nativist. In accordance with his denial of climate science,[34] former US president Donald Trump's blatant racist reference to African countries and Haiti as "shithole countries,"[35] his suggestion to bring more immigrants from countries such as Norway to the US, his calling Mexicans drug traffickers, criminals and rapists, as well as his support of the white supremacist "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville in August 2017, constitute further instances of fortressing borders based on hierarchies of humanity.

This dates back to earlier periods of American history, when, contrary to the current Green slogan "think globally," nativism and environmentalism were deeply

30 Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company 1951).

31 Hönig, "States, Borders and the State of Exception," 128.

32 Sarah Manavis, "Eco-fascism: The ideology marrying environmentalism and white supremacy thriving online," https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/2018/09/eco-fascism-ideology-marrying-environmentalism-and-white-supremacy, *The New Statesman*, 28 September 2018 (22 January 2022).

33 Aude Mazoue, "Le Pen's National Rally goes green in bid for European election votes," https://www.france24.com/en/20190420-le-pen-national-rally-front-environment-european-elections-france, *France24*, 20 April 2019 (22 January 2022).

34 The US withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement on 4 November 2019.

35 Eli Warkins and Abby Philip, "Trump decries immigrants from 'shithole countries' coming to US," https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/immigrants-shithole-countries-trump/index.html, *CNN*, 21 January 2020 (22 January 2022).

intertwined.[36] Madison Grant, whose 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race* expounded eugenicist views and the so-called Nordic theory of a racial hierarchy of European peoples,[37] represents this current of thought very well. In the early twentieth century, he helped found the *Save the Redwoods League* and the *National Parks Association*. He also served as vice president of the *Immigration Restriction League*, which successfully lobbied to cut off most eastern and southern European (read: non-Christian and non-Nordic) immigration to the United States in 1924. He dedicated his life to preserving endangered flora and natural resources as well as his own "endangered race."[38] Adolf Hitler in a personal message to Grant called *The Passing of the Great Race* his bible.[39] In a contemporary continuation, online neo-Nazi and alt-right movements today argue that the Third Reich was one of the earliest governments to make conservationism a major focus. Indeed, they refer to the 1935 "Reichsnaturschutzgesetz" (RNG, Reich Nature Protection Law), which, according to Charles Closmann in *How Green Were the Nazis?: Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich* (2005), "reflects simultaneously key elements of both progressive preservationism of the 1930s, such as the concepts of natural monuments and nature protection areas, and of Nazism, such as racialism and nationalism."[40] These historical developments and discourses reveal interlocking causes and effects of right-wing ideology with environmentalist thought, fittingly converging in the twenty-first-century far-right authors and commentators who offer environmentalist justifications for xenophobic sentiments by blaming illegal immigration as responsible for environmental problems.

Right-wing extremists neglect the fact that internally forced displacements and international refugee waves are not the causes of climate change but often the effects of it. Because the category of the climate refugee does not exist in international law, these unwelcomed border-crossers will be subject to the biopolitical bordering which begins with reducing them from refugee status to unauthorized

36 Peter Beinart, "White Nationalists Discover the Environment," https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/white-nationalists-discover-the-environment/595489/, *The Atlantic*, 5 August 2019 (22 January 2022).

37 Madison Grant, "The Passing of the Great Race," *Geographical Review* 2.5 (1916): 354–360.

38 Beinart, "White Nationalists."

39 Cf. Jedediah Purdy, "Environmentalism's Racist History," https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/environmentalisms-racist-history, *The New Yorker*, 13 August 2015 (22 January 2022).

40 Quoted in Wilko Graf von Hardenberg, "Hitler's Nature: Environmental Policies in Nazi Germany," Review of *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*, eds. Marc Cioc Franz-Josef Brueggemeier and Thomas Zeller, http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12420, *H-Environment*, October 2006 (22 January 2022).

migrants.[41] The 1951 Geneva Convention defines a "refugee" as a person who has crossed an international border "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."[42] While a refugee is entitled to some indivisible and inalienable human rights under the international law, the unauthorized migrant is subject to bordering practices of sovereign powers who investigate if the borders have been crossed legally or not.[43] Unauthorized immigrants and refugees, before being granted asylum, live a long "unlivable and ungrievable life" in the state of exception of non-citizen spaces of refugee camps.[44] Climate refugees and unauthorized immigrants warn us to rethink the world anew in order to recognize "refugee" as a rightful state of being – because, as Agamben reminds us, "only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable."[45]

Conclusion

Climate refugees from the Global South are the forerunners of the existential threat that global warming poses to us and our planet. If we do not immediately end the war that our way of living and thinking is imposing on planet Earth, soon we will all, and not merely climate refugees, have to live in a permanent "state of emergency" with suspended law or legalized lawlessness. As the climate activist

41 Biopolitics is concerned, as Giorgio Agamben put it, with the "inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power." Hönig, "States, Borders and the State of Exception," 127; referencing Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 71.

42 UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, "The 1951 Refugee Convention," https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10 (27 January 2023).

43 In some contexts, the definition extends to persons fleeing "events seriously disturbing public order" (1969 OAU Convention; 1984 Cartagena Declaration). Climate change affects people inside their own countries, and typically creates internal displacement before it reaches a level where it displaces people across borders. There may be situations where the refugee criteria of the 1951 Convention or broader refugee criteria of regional refugee law frameworks may apply, for example if drought-related famine is linked to situations of armed conflict and violence – an area known as "nexus dynamics." Regardless, the term "climate refugee" is not endorsed by UNHCR, and it is more accurate to refer to "persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change." Cf. UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, "Climate Change and Disaster Displacement," https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html (27 January 2023).

44 For ungrievability, see Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004).

45 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 25.

Greta Thunberg, in her address to the *Davos World Economic Forum*, framed it: Our house is on fire. And yet the question remains, "What is wrong with us? What is really preventing us from putting out the fire that is threatening to burn down our collective house? Why should we be waiting for politicians and sovereign powers to declare a 'state of emergency'?"[46]

Grassroots activism of mass movements such as Climate Justice, Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion should proliferate and be accompanied with political acts such as the "Green New Deal" to announce a planetary emergency in search for global solidarity and transnational care for nature and human lives to put out a fire that will certainly not respect our national bordering politics. Such movements will encourage us to bridge divides of faith, race, and national borders and fight against hatred and politics of fear and xenophobia. Because a fight for "a world that thrives is one where both people and planet are seen for their inextricable value and connectedness."[47] These global climate movements, as Naomi Klein points out with her argument regarding the positive potentials of crises, could help us

> to reclaim our democracies, to rebuild and revive our local economies, to open borders to migrants whose displacement is linked to climate impacts; to finally respect Indigenous land rights – all of which would help to end grotesque levels of inequality within our nations and between them.[48]

If we survive the global warming, the new world order after 'climate barbarism' has to assure more equalities and civil liberties and less exploitation of the planet Earth and its inhabitants. In this new world, where a free flow of people is possible, nationalism and racist imageries of non-white migrants and refugees will be replaced with welcoming cultures, tolerance, humane interaction and dialogue among different cultures and languages regardless of nationalities and ethnicities.

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46 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 18.

47 Rebecca Solnit, "Why climate action is the antithesis of white supremacy," Interview with Hoda Baraka, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/19/why-youll-never-meet-a-white-supremacist-who-cares-about-climate-change, *The Guardian*, 19 March 2019 (20 January 2022).

48 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 7.

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Léa Coffineau

Chapter 5
Images of Migration: The Ethics and Perils of Visual Representation

Grey concrete walls trembling under rocket fire, a family running to escape before their house collapses in a giant cloud of dust. A shaky boat overcrowded with empty-eyed men, pitching dangerously on dark waters, still far, too far from the coast. A continuous flow of exhausted, walking bodies carrying their only belongings on their back, making their way through the jungle. Women standing in line for the distribution of food rations in a refugee camp, with only a rocky desert for horizon.

These catastrophic scenes are among the many images that immediately come to mind when prompted to "imagine migration." Visual messages of emergency, violence and anxiety have filled the "migration imaginary"[1] during the second half of the twentieth century, and even more so this past decade with the advent of the heavily broadcasted 2015 "migrant crisis."[2] This imaginary is built and constantly supplied by the work of journalists, writers, photographers, film directors, and other researchers. For the purpose of this chapter, I am interested in images of migration produced by filmmakers in a creative perspective, images that, in one way or another, represent a certain idea of the migration experience. I purposefully do not discriminate here between documentary and fiction since, as we will see it later, neither genre can claim to achieve truth-making. In this chapter, I will take a close look at the ethics and perils of visual representation, thus unveiling the power of reality-production lying in the hands of the "maker of images," and the responsibilities that come along with it.

How are these images created? Why and for whom? This set of questions is necessary to investigate the responsibility of the image-maker, the purpose of image-making and the intended audience of these images. To help me grapple with these interrogations, I will rely on artist and scholar Mieke Bal's thoughtful reflection on

1 Cf. Anne-Marie Fortier, "The Migration Imaginary and the Politics of Personhood," in *Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Michi Messer, Renee Schroeder, Ruth Wodak (Vienna: Springer, 2012), 31–41.

2 Karen Akoka, Marine Carlier and Solange de Coussemaker, "It is not a migrant crisis but a crisis of hospitality policies," *Revue Projet* 360.5 (2017): 77–83.

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image-making developed throughout *Image-Thinking: Art Making as Cultural Analysis*,[3] a recently published anthology of her own career and visual work.

But before we start thinking forward, I think it is important to clarify which type of migration this chapter will be focusing on. A phenomenon as ancient as humanity itself, mobility has always taken an active part in the history of civilizations. "After all, if there were no borders, there would be no migrants – only mobility," writes Nicholas de Genova.[4] As a matter of fact, humans were first creatures of movement before becoming creatures of states and borders. Yet we are not concerned here with chosen migration, with the individual endeavour of those privileged enough to have a choice between leaving and staying without their decision significantly impacting their life quality or physical integrity. I am writing about forced migration, the phenomenon that makes one leave a place of belonging to seek safety and build a better life elsewhere. The phenomenon that makes one become a "migrant," a forever transitory being, not quite here, not quite there. Let us be reminded that the distinction between "economic migrant" and "refugee" is an artificial one, fabricated by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.[5] In a ground-breaking article published at a time when states and borders were scrambling to adjust to the end of the Western/Eastern bloc dynamics, law scholar Buphinder S. Chimni denounced "the myth of difference"[6] embedded in UNHCR policies that made a distinction between European refugees and refugees from the so-called Third World. Although, as Chimni explains, this "myth" was already present within the 1951 Convention, it took a whole new importance during the Cold War as refugees were then seen to possess "ideological and political value"[7] for the host states. There was the "white, male and anti-communist"[8] refugee – and the others. "Internal to the construction of the myth of difference is the idea that the root causes of refugee flows in the Third World are markedly different from the causes which led to displacement of refugees in Europe," Chimni observes.[9] This distinction, which progressively eliminated a large amount of migrants from the legal category of "refugee," seems to have for only

3 Mieke Bal, *Image-Thinking: Art Making as Cultural Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

4 Nicholas De Genova, "'We are of the connections': migration, methodological nationalism, and 'militant research,'" *Postcolonial Studies* 16.3 (2013): 250–258.

5 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, September 2011, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10 (8 December 2021).

6 Buphinder S. Chimni, "The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11.4 (1998): 350–374.

7 Chimni, "The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies," 355–356.

8 Chimni, "The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies," 351.

9 Chimni, "The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies", 360.

purpose to allow states to discriminatorily determine who is entitled or not to live within their borders. As activist and writer Harsha Walia succinctly puts it, "[c]lassification such as 'migrant' or 'refugee' don't represent unified social groups so much as they symbolize state-regulated relations of governance and difference."[10] Refusing this classification, I will only use the term "migrant" in this chapter.

Another crucial aspect of the analysis I am developing in this chapter concerns the intended audience of "images of migration." Who needs to *imagine* migration? Who needs to *know* migration? The answer seems self-evident: one who has not already lived or experienced it, one who benefits from such a privileged environment that transnational mobility is a given and forced migration out of the picture, not even a distant possibility. "We must wonder," writes Mieke Bal, "why people decide they must leave behind their affective ties, relatives, friends, and habits – in short, everything that constitutes their intimate everyday lives. Imagine."[11] Images have the power to generate knowledge, and this power has time and again proven essential to episodes of urgent political and social change. During the second half of the nineteenth century, formerly enslaved abolitionist writer Frederick Douglass became the most photographed man in the world. And he did not multiply portraits of his penetrating gaze and legendary rictus out of narcissistic fascination for his own image. "He enlisted these images as another thrust of his campaign, offering the public a positive view of a Black person to oppose the negative caricatures that were commonplace in newspapers. [. . .] With them, picture by picture, he slowly changed the public's perception of an African-American," Ainissa Ramirez argues.[12]

In the same way that Douglass combatted American racism through the construction of a new imaginary of Blackness, image-makers today can fight anti-immigrant and nationalist sentiments. Other images that changed the face of the world are the films and photographs taken of the Nazi death camps at their liberation. At first retained because of the gruesome reality they captured, they were soon disclosed: for they were the only way to make the public realise and understand the magnitude of the Holocaust. However, beyond their use as legal evidence or their archival value, these images alone cannot tell the whole story of the victims of the regime. Bare death alone cannot tell what has been lost and

10 Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Gobal Migrations, Capitalism and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 2.

11 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 259.

12 Ainissa G. Ramirez, "Black Images Matter: How Cameras Helped – and Sometimes Harmed – Black People," *Scientific American*, 8 July 2020, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/black-images-matter-how-cameras-helped-mdash-and-sometimes-harmed-mdash-black-people/ (11 October 2021).

forever disfigured. Director Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour long documentary film *Shoah* released in 1985[13] surprised the audience by its total absence of archival footage, preferring to let survivors, but also perpetrators and witnesses, tell their own stories while the camera takes the spectator on a bucolic pilgrimage, challenging the usual depiction of the Holocaust. We often forget about the lives that existed before the horror, and about those who had to go on after it. We often think of the Nazi genocide as a moment suspended in time, a flash of barbarism that still today leaves us numb and mournful. But in the same way that the Nazi genocide does not amount to the static and faceless horror of the "final solution," migration is neither an event, nor a moment or a place. Or rather, it is all of these, and so much more.

The practice of image-making is by necessity caught up in its own ethics and politics. An anthropologist and filmmaker myself, I advocate a sensible and inductive approach close to what Mieke Bal has coined *image-thinking*. Picking up a camera was for me more about thinking differently than about "adding creativity" to my intellectual practice. It was also about producing something tangible, something that I could give back, and that could reach a broader audience than that of an academic essay. In contrast to the customary method where "first comes the research, then the artistic work that results,"[14] *image-thinking* uses the image-making process as an opportunity to get to know the subject and their reality. In other words, rather than using reality to make a point, the approach intends to learn from the observed reality. It is a vow of humility and surrender. "The images are not 'illustrations,' which would subordinate the visual to the intellectual content," as Bal puts it.[15] Rather, they are an integral part of the intellectual process of research, a way for the researcher to get to know the world. Images should change the image-maker, and not the reverse. When reflecting on photography, Roland Barthes wrote, "I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think."[16] Image-makers committed to bearing witness need to remove themselves from the position of the storyteller and accept to share the steering wheel.

An important part of Bal's creative career has focused on what she calls "migratory aesthetics." In the documentary film *Mille et un jours*,[17] Bal tells the story of Tarek, a young undocumented migrant from Tunisia, in his journey to settle and

13 *Shoah*, directed by Claude Lanzmann (New Yorker Films, 1985), 566 minutes.

14 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 8.

15 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, xx.

16 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1982), 21.

17 *Mille et un jours,* directed by Mieke Bal, Zen Marie, Thomas Sykora, Gary Ward and Michelle Williams Gamaker (2004), 44 minutes.

live legally in France. The camera follows him through the streets of Paris during the last days of preparations leading to his wedding day. Determined and cheerful, Tarek leads the way and sets the pace, inviting the spectator into his personal life and that of his future wife's family. Much like Bal's, my work focuses on whatever moments, whatever words the subjects are ready to share with me and my camera. I want to portray them the way they want to be seen and let go of "authorial control."[18] This means that I must personally get involved in a relationship based on trust and exchange. It is an emotional work that I choose to carry out alone, being in charge of both image and sound, not to overwhelm the subjects with the presence of a full crew. Any imposition of the camera without clear explanation of the endeavour and full consent of the subjects would be sheer violation of the ethics of *witnessing*. I am writing here about the role of the witness as opposed to that of the spectator – a distinction established by Saidiya Hartman:

> Are we witnesses who confirm the truth of what happened in the face of the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortions of torture, the sheer unrepresentability of terror, and the repression of the dominant accounts? Or are we voyeurs fascinated with and repelled by exhibitions of terror and sufferance? [. . .] At issue here is the precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator.[19]

The migration imaginary is most often built ignorant of, and even sometimes against, the will of migrants themselves. If my training as an ethnographer has taught me one thing, it is that the practice of ethnography, and particularly of interviews, *can too easily turn into* a process of extraction. And adding the presence of a camera to that of the researcher is all the more alienating. But it does not have to be, it can also grow into an exchange where each part exercises its agency, by setting boundaries and respecting the other's. As a matter of fact, it is not unusual that I turn off the camera while leaving the microphone on in an effort to try and relieve the subjects from the pressure of the "third eye." Anthropologist and filmmaker Jean Rouch, pioneer of the ethnographic film genre, wrote, "Every time a film is shot, privacy is violated."[20] Do we not say that images are *taken* or *captured*? This violence, although it may sometimes be justified by the greater good of producing knowledge, needs to be acknowledged, along with the power imbalance existing between the subject and the image-maker. When in the process of making images, for instance, I always make sure to share the

18 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 257.

19 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection. Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3–4.

20 Jean Rouch, "The Camera and Man," In *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Paul Hockings (Boston: de Gruyter Mouton, 2003), 88.

footage with the subjects to show them how their image and reality are captured. Their consent is an ongoing process and "to a serious extent," as Bal puts it, "they make the film and decide what to say and do."[21]

Adhering to this ethics is a matter of respect for the subjects, but also for the future audience of the images. The more the image-maker interacts with the subjects and intervenes in their lived reality, the more this reality is corrupted by a preconceived vision and the thoughts of the director or photographer, and so are the produced images. This is not only true for formal interviews and more spontaneous conversations where the words of the researcher and the way questions are framed can highly impact the subjects' answers. It is also valid for each and every moment the subjects spend in the company of a camera directly pointing at them. To better appreciate and comprehend the images that are offered to us daily, it seems critical to get rid of the fantasy that a camera and its operator could somehow be a "fly on the wall," able to seize the reality "as it is," without interference, working unnoticed, as if invisible. In one of his most famous essays, *The Camera and Man*,[22] Jean Rouch shed light on the role of the "participant camera" in the context of documentary filmmaking. The instrument of capture is active in the reality of the subjects and influences the way they move, speak and even think. Later in the same essay, when explaining his preference for film rather than writing as a way to produce anthropological knowledge, Rouch writes: "film is the only method I have to show another just the way I see him."[23] This seemingly innocuous sentence exposes the major, and inescapable, ethical conflict of the documentary genre, the one opposing truth-claim to fiction. Rouch does not pretend to show the reality of the people filmed as it is but instead as he *himself* sees it. Images are never innocent or objective, and neither is the knowledge they produce.

In the making of the migration imaginary, the "narrative responsibility"[24] of the person behind the camera is immense, and fiction – meaning fabrication, distortion – ineluctable. Images tell stories, even if the maker is mindful of the pitfalls and doing their best to represent the subjects' reality. The framing of an image creates fiction. The moment when the image is taken creates fiction. The final selection of images as well as their sequencing create fiction. These are all conscious choices made during the production and postproduction of images and for which the image-maker is responsible. As much as I am aware of the ethics of the documentary genre, and as much as I want to stick to the realities of the

21 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 104.
22 Rouch, "The Camera and Man," 79–98.
23 Rouch, "The Camera and Man," 95.
24 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 90.

subjects of my films, the way I edit interviews, the way I emphasise silences, and even more what I decide to leave out of the final cuts, tell a story. A story I am responsible for. Montage is nothing else but "fictional connections," Bal writes.[25] Narration through aesthetics is where the "artwork" emerges but also where reality is transformed, twisted and recalibrated to better fit one objective: engaging the spectator. Because whatever the image's nature, whatever its politics, it is always made to be seen, and, even better, remembered. For the artist's egoistic purposes or for the greater good of raising awareness: the *raison d'être* of an image is its impression on the spectator's mind. The widely distributed and highly praised documentary film *Human Flow* by Ai Weiwei[26] uses non-diegetic music to accompany drone-taken images of refugee camps and overcrowded boats drifting at sea. Both the dramatic music and the landscape views are traditional fictionalising processes used to create or perpetuate a specific discourse on migration. The first one is used to enforce a strong emotional reaction of the spectator to the tragedy of displacement and border-crossing, in case images do not suffice. The second reinforces the imaginary of masses we are too often presented with. The individual migrant and their story disappear under waves of desperation, cries and tears. These two production choices made by the director contribute to the crisis element of the migration imaginary, making migration a dramatic event suspended in time and removed from any social and historical context. Even worse, it participates in othering the figure of the migrant, making them a faceless tragic hero disfigured by pain and loss, so remote from the spectator that the only possible response to these images is pity or sorrow.

When dealing with such a critical event as illegal border-crossing, with the dangers, violence and suffering it entails, "showing can also lead to voyeurism," warns Mieke Bal.[27] Indeed, most images of migration focus on negative experiences, on physical and psychological trauma endured by migrants, sometimes dangerously tending towards "trauma porn," a form of visual representation that exploits an oppressed group's pain and death (most often Black and Brown) to affect, and even entertain, a more privileged audience (often White). These images mine the suffering of the subjects to bolster the inner growth of the spectator, appealing to their white saviour complex. The debunking of this mechanism has always been a focal point of Black studies scholarships in the United States, denouncing the widespread sharing of lynching photographs in the press, questioning the ultraviolent representation of slavery in cinema, as well as American

25 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 300.

26 *Human Flow*, directed by Ai Weiwei (Participant Media, 2017), 140 minutes.

27 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 36.

society's obscene obsession for Black death. With the intensification of video sharing on social media, this past decade has seen images of (police) brutality against Black bodies saturate all platforms. I argue that this form of voyeurism also pertains to the migrant's body who only gains attention when drowning in the Aegean Sea or chased down by horse-mounted patrol agents in Texas, at the border with Mexico. This visual representation is not only extractive and manipulative, it also encourages the "trivialization" of violence and trauma in our imaginary[28] and results in the desensitization of the public. As Saidiya Hartman has pointed out with regard to such images, "[r]ather than inciting indignation, too often they immure us to pain by virtue of their familiarity."[29]

Recourse to voyeurism and tear-jerking mechanisms is symptomatic of the humanitarian discourse employed by most visual productions on migrants and migration. Focusing on crisis and emergency, humanitarian discourse draws a line between the one who needs help and the one who can provide help, appealing to the spectator's compassion to generate engagement. Even more importantly, it draws a line between the one who deserves help and the one who does not – or, as anthropologist of care Miriam Ticktin explains, "humanitarianism sets up a distinction between innocence and guilt, leaving no space for the experiences of life."[30] Visual representations of migrants almost systematically portray them as dispossessed, naive wanderers, victims of their inescapable fate demanding grace from whomever may grant it. Most narratives insist on the atrocious circumstances that caused the subjects to migrate against their will and obscure their political agency. The migrant is not allowed to make mistakes, to have nuanced experiences, or to transcend their assigned status of victim. As a matter of fact, women and children are most often chosen to be the face of migration as fragile, non-threatening figures who need to be cared for and about. This common media representation is extremely harmful, as Ticktin writes: "Of course, care is welcome; but what does it mean to be welcomed as a victim, passive, and unable to take care of oneself? In the face of such images, will these migrants be able to get a job once they are up on their feet again? Will they be trusted as smart, capable, responsible?"[31]

28 Danielle M. Taylor, "From Lynching to Livestreams: Trauma Porn and the Historic Trivializing of Black Death," *JOLT* (blog), 14 October 2020, https://jolt.richmond.edu/2020/10/14/the-revolution-should-be-cautiously-televised/ (3 October 2021).

29 Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 3.

30 Miriam Ticktin, "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83.2 (2016): 257.

31 Ticktin, "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders," 260.

Mieke Bal's *Mille et un jours* does a beautiful work of showing migration in all its layers of reality. Tarek, the protagonist of the film, first came to France to study and then overstayed his student visa after getting his degree. He openly discusses his living undocumented in the country, his working undeclared, and planning the wedding that will finally grant him a legal immigrant status in France. Tarek has had to strategise in order to build the life he wants for himself, even if it meant for him to play hide and seek with the law. Tarek is a person before being a migrant. In that sense, Bal calls for the "de-fetishisation of right and wrong,"[32] and refuses to take sides or to impose such a choice to her audience.[33] What does it say about us that we need migrants to be innocent to be tolerable? What does it say about us that we need migrants to abandon all power of decision to be worthy of hospitality?

The politics of compassion at play within visual representations of migration also often mirror and encourage racial biases. In 2014, the international organization Save The Children launched one of the most viral ad campaigns of the decade. The video clip, titled "Most Shocking Second a Day," follows a young girl in her daily life full of joy and laughter before war erupts and forces her and her family to leave their home. Within one minute and twenty-seconds, the smile illuminating her freckled little face is erased by dust and tears. At first glance, there is nothing special about this fundraising ad which relies on the traditional semiotics of humanitarianism. Except that the little girl is white and that the scene is set in today's London. The video clip, initially titled "If London Were Syria," ends with the message: "Just because it isn't happening here doesn't mean it isn't happening."[34] Even if the intention of the campaign is laudable (i.e. raising awareness), there is something utterly concerning about the fact that one needs to see the tears and fear of a white child to feel compassion, when the tears of Black and Brown children are doing the headlines every day. What does this whitewashing of the migration imaginary say about us?

Our imaginary of migration is heavily gendered and racialised through the prism of visual representation. It is informed by a new genre of still life crafted by Western newspapers exhibiting bodies of Black men washed ashore by the sea, face down. It is nourished by the now familiar sight of a light-skinned, blue-eyed child holding on tight to a stuffed animal displayed on a humanitarian organization's website. It is inspired by the honorary degree awarded with much

32 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 102.

33 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 91.

34 Save The Children, "Most Shocking Second a Day Video." YouTube Video, 00:01:34, 5 March, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBQ-IoHfimQ&ab_channel=SaveTheChildren (28 March 2022).

fanfare by a prestigious university to a woman scientist from the East for her loud rejection of religious laws. Migrants ought to be helpless, grateful and easily assimilable into the fabric of western societies in order to be acceptable.[35] If otherwise, their dying or dead bodies only are worthy of compassion. Unfortunately, "Compassion does not transform into political outrage," as Ticktin reminds us.[36] Compassion is neither sufficient nor generative, it is a stagnant, self-contenting emotion that does not give rise to political action and change. It is high time to "make space for new affective and political grammars in response to suffering, injustice and death."[37] And image-makers are, to a large extent, responsible for the shaping of these new grammars. This injunction to making space is also an invitation to seeking out and giving way to protagonists who contribute themselves to the imaginary. Here I must mention the work of the Syrian collective of visual artists Abounaddara who, since the early days of the revolution in 2011, has been reclaiming the "Right to the Image." In an article published in 2017 and titled after Bob Dylan's lyrics "Dignity Has Never Been Photographed," the collective states, "dignity is compromised when Syrians are unable to become the producers of their own image."[38] Following this same ethics of self-representation, anthropologist Jason De León lent a camera to his informants for them to document in their own way the crossing of the Sonoran desert at the border between Mexico and the United States. The resulting images, published in De León's acclaimed monograph *The Land of Open Graves*, propose a much quieter and contemplative insight than one might expect of such a dreadful and arduous journey. Memo, Lucho and Angel, as they are named in the book, focused their lens on stunning landscapes and peaceful herds of cows, and on themselves posing, climbing, drinking, resting.[39]

As I stated earlier in this chapter, migration is not an event, not a moment or a place. Migration is not a crisis. Migration is everywhere and in everyone. It transcends the individual on the move and affects all those around, starting with those who do not leave. Bal's installation "Nothing is Missing" features the voices of mothers from around the world who have "lost" a child to migration. In the

35 As I am wrapping up the writing of this chapter, European states are opening their borders to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion in an unprecedented show of humanitarian solidarity, a sharp contrast to the treatment of migrants arriving from the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa in 2015.

36 Ticktin, "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders," 266.

37 Ticktin, "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders," 256.

38 See their website: https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/949/abounaddara (12 March 2022).

39 Jason De León, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

intimacy of a living room decor, the spectator is invited to listen to these women as their close-up faces appear on multiple screens. "Still living in their home countries, they all saw a child leave to go to Western Europe or to the United States,"[40] and confess to the camera their hopes and fears for those who might never come back, and the inescapable void they have left behind.

If migration transcends the boundaries of individual experience, it also transcends time and lives through generations. In the documentary film *Separations*,[41] Bal draws the portrait of Edith, mother of Andréa Seligmann Silva – co-director of the film, and retired psychiatrist living in São Paulo. Edith fled Nazi Germany with her parents at the age of three years old, and, after a halt in England, settled in Brazil, where she later married, built a solid professional career, and had five children. Yet, Edith has lived with the trauma of forced migration endured by her parents, a trauma so deeply entrenched and repressed in her that it burst into a psychotic crisis a few years before the film was shot. Even more tellingly, each of Edith's five children, who were born and raised in Brazil, grew up "feeling like an immigrant" and left the country once adults. They all settled in different countries, enjoying the privilege to get to build their own place of belonging, and to feel "at home." This fracture in identity coupled with a quest for belonging is a crucial component of the migration experience, one that I emphasised in my short documentary film *Where Are You From?*[42] Born in France as the daughters of West and Central African immigrants, Iman, Takoba and Amina grew up in a society that treated them like "foreigners." They chose to emigrate to the United States where they actually became immigrants, finally able to conceive an existence beyond national identities. The three of them are today thriving in their new lives, a new generation of diaspora, building a world "in which migration is generalised and must be considered normal,"[43] imagining a world not bound by borders, ethnicity and nationalism.

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40 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 259.

41 *Separations*, directed by Mieke Bal and Andréa Seligmann Silva (2010), 54 minutes.

42 *Where Are You From?* directed by Léa Coffineau (2021), 00:13:43, https://vimeo.com/560101215, 2021 (14 December 2022).

43 Bal, *Image-Thinking*, 54.

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Mieke Bal and Léa Coffineau

Chapter 6
On Empathy and Migratory Relationalities: A Conversation with Mieke Bal

Léa Coffineau (LC): Could you tell us more about your conceptions of "migratory culture" and "migratory aesthetics" which are critical to your academic and creative work?

Mieke Bal (MB): I developed those concepts when I was involved in co-curating an exhibition, *2MOVE: Double Movement, Migratory Aesthetics*. This emerged from a collaboration with Spanish art historian, curator and writer Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro, with whom I share a commitment to the issue of migration, and the endeavour to present this in a positive spirit. The specific angle of the exhibition, which concerned the way video can help articulate migratory culture and vice versa, compelled developing a theoretical framework within which the individual works made sense and to which, conversely, each of them contributed. In the catalogue essay for that exhibition I laid out its key concepts. These concepts – movement, time, memory and contact – were meant to clarify with increasing specificity how video and the migratory can illuminate each other, without making migration a thematic focus. The exhibition held videos about migration, but also without any thematic link to that topic. Not the movement itself but the way it is "de-naturalized" begins to demonstrate a specific bond between video and migratory culture. To put it simply: both are based on movement, but that movement is not "natural". Frequently, the videos deployed slow-down, for example, to make the movement more visible. This de-naturalizing process, performed in different ways and with different thematic emphases by all the works, was due to the superposition of the two terms of the exhibition's title, "aesthetics" and the "migratory," which I will briefly explain.

Then, and ever since, I have used "aesthetics" in this framework not so much as a philosophical domain, but rather as a term to refer to an experience of sensate binding, a connectivity based on the senses, and the "-s" at the end of the word is meant to indicate the plural form. For such a conception of aesthetics that works for a better understanding of "the migratory" I have looked at the conception developed by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, a predecessor of Kant, who considers the aesthetic as three things at once: 1) binding 2) through the senses 3) in public space. Of course, this is over-succinct rendering of a 900-page treatise written in Latin in the mid-eighteenth century, but the three aspects sound totally right for the understanding of the migratory I am seeking to promote. I have gathered information about

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Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750) from a succinct article by Tomáš Hlobil,[1] and learned a lot from the way it can be deployed for visual analysis from a book by Jill Bennett.[2]

The Baumgartian aesthetic as summed up in this way is very right for a combination with "the migratory". Migratory, as a qualifier, refers to the traces, equally sensate, of the movements of migration that characterize contemporary culture. Both terms are programmatic: different aesthetic experiences are offered through the encounter with such traces.

The qualifying term is derived from, but not to be conflated with, migration as a concrete situation in which people can find themselves. Migration is a movement of people with undetermined destination and duration. While I do not wish to circumscribe migration, from which migratory is derived, with ontologically dubious definitions, it is clearly not the same as tourism – voluntary travel with a return ticket. Nor can the experiences I will not explicitly distinguish here, of exile and diaspora, or of politically or economically-driven displacements, be conflated in our understanding of those experiences. Instead, I consider the traces of migration of all these kinds together, as traces of the movement of people. James Clifford has written a very helpful analysis of the definitions of these diverging terms, to which I must simply refer here. On tourism, I was very convinced by Jonathan Culler's lucid analysis. With these two articles together, it becomes really easy to understand why the migratory needs its own concept.[3]

For those who perceive these movements, the people called migrants constitute, so to say, a moving image. Like video, they form images that move, and that move us emotionally. An artistic example is William Kentridge's endless stream of shadow figures, in *Shadow Procession.* Those figures, presented in black shadows, are walking and walking, some of them carrying household furniture on their backs. They present such an image of migration, of people on the move. Using the technique of a Brecht-derived puppet theatre, Kentridge's work shows movement relentlessly. Here, realistic representation is cast aside in favour of a mode of presentation that leaves to the viewer the option to flesh out in what mood to watch these rows of displaced people, figures with their burdens, their stacks, including a miner dangling from the gallows, including workmen carrying entire neighbourhoods and city-scapes. This ambiguity of mood – or, from a

1 Tomáš Hlobil, "Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten: Ästhetik," *Estetika* 46.1 (2009): 105–110.

2 Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

3 James Clifford, "Diasporas," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 244–278; Jonathan Culler, "The Semiotics of Tourism," in *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 153–167.

different perspective, freedom – accounts for the visual and musical discourse of vaudeville, a merry entertainment that hits the viewer with its sudden moments of a "cruel choreography of power relations". This is lucidly analysed by Ari Sitas. The backdrop of Johannesburg suburbs and the devastated landscape that surrounds them is extremely relevant for the artist's work. For this framing, it is rewarding to read the city's illuminating "biography" by Achille Mbembe.[4]

I have myself explored these traces that constitute the migratory culture in which we all live, in a film and installation project based on Berlin, titled *GLUB (Hearts)*. An article about this project appeared a year later, and explains the concept in more detail, in relation to such a banal-seeming, everyday issue as visible (left-overs of) food. There I analyse the way that what seems simply dirt on the streets of a formerly pristine-clean city like Berlin, is not only a visual enrichment but also a trigger and occasion for intercultural encounters. To sum up: "migratory aesthetics" is the way the presence of migrants is part of our culture, and the ways in which in public space, encounters occasioned by sense-experiences can occasion contact.

Fig. 1: Video still from *GLUB (Hearts)* by Mieke Bal and Sharam Entekhabi (Cinema Suitcase), 2004.

LC: Writing for this edited volume, I was compelled to think through the relationship between imagination and the production of knowledge. Reading your book, it seems a third factor comes into the equation: empathy. How do you think these three elements come into play in the individual's mind?

MB: Yes, for me, in order to be culturally productive, the intricate, indispensable relationship between the production of knowledge and the imagination must be bound to a relationality that every individual experiences all the time. This is what we call

4 Ari Sitas, "Procession and Public Rituals," in *William Kentridge: Exhibition Catalogue* (Chicago and New York: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001), 59–66; Achille Mbembe, "Aesthetics of Superfluity," *Public Culture* 16.3 (2004): 373–405.

empathy. The first two have been put forward many times. In my 2022 book I have recalled Georges Didi Huberman's strong opening sentence of his short book on photographs of the Nazi concentration camps: "In order to know, you must imagine". With that saying he countered both the taboo on representing traumatic states, and on imaginative supplementing of what cannot be known in the strict sense of epistemology. If the photographs are too few, unclear, and therefore, lacking in cognitive persuasion, imagining what happened and of which the four photographs he discusses are traces, is the only option, lest we reject the attempts to know what happened. However, it is not enough to, individually, imagine what happened. We are also compelled to bring that imaginative knowledge into contact with others, especially those who suffered from it. That is where empathy comes in.[5]

The subject of empathy, for artworks, is their "second person": the viewer, visitor, reader who attempts to go with the flow of what the work shows. This is the social interlocutor, who can, for example, potentially help traumatized people presented in the artworks, to overcome their paralyzing state, at least partially. "Second-personhood" is the anchor of empathy. This is a concept I have been thinking through with the help of the work of Canadian philosopher Lorraine Code. For Code, the concept-metaphor that best embodies her ideal is the friend, not the lover, which was the standard "conceptual persona" in antiquity. Moreover, in Code's reflection the conceptual persona of the friend – the model of friendship – is not embedded in a definition of philosophy but of knowledge.

This mobilises its relevance for the production of knowledge we are talking about here. Importantly, this definition is necessarily one that takes knowledge as provisional. If the authority of the author/artist, as well as that of the teacher, is unfixed, then the place it vacates can be occupied by *theory*. Paul de Man defined theory long ago as "a controlled reflection on the formation of method". The teacher, then, no longer holds the authority to dictate the method; her task is only to facilitate a reflection that is ongoing and interactive. Knowledge is knowing that reflection cannot be terminated. Moreover, to recycle Shoshana Felman's phrase, knowledge is not to learn something *about* but to learn something *from*. Knowledge, not as a substance or content "out there" waiting to be appropriated but as the "how-to" aspect, bears on such learning *from* the practice of interdisciplinary cultural analysis.[6]

Felman's description of teaching as facilitating the *condition* of knowledge, like Code's apparently small shift from lover to friend is, at least provisionally, a

5 Cf. Mieke Bal, *Image-Thinking: Art-Making as Cultural Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

6 Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory," *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982): 4; Shoshana Felman, "Psychoanalysis and Education: Teaching Terminable and Interminable," *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982): 21–44.

way out of the philosophy/humanities misfit. Friendship is a paradigm for knowledge-production, the traditional task of the humanities, but then production as interminable process, not as preface to a product (Felman) and in the second-personhood that undermines authority, replacing it with empathy. Code lists the following features of friendship, as opposed to the lover's passion, as productive analogies for knowledge production:

- such knowledge is not achieved at once, rather it develops
- it is open to interpretation at different levels
- it admits degrees
- it changes
- subject and object positions in the process of knowledge construction are reversible
- it is a never-accomplished constant process
- the "more-or-lessness" of this knowledge affirms the need to reserve and revise judgement.[7]

This list helps to understand the humanities as a wide field, "rhizomically" organised according to a dynamic interdisciplinary *practice.*

This, of course, brings me to René Descartes, an authority considered "obsolete" on whom I have ventured to make a film. As I have argued apropos of that film, *REASONABLE DOUBT* (2016), in chapter five of my book, the notion that Descartes is the bad guy of Enlightenment rationalism seems to reduce him in the same way as he was accused of reducing human existence. According to French philosopher Jean-Joseph Goux, the stake of the cogito is not primarily the link between thinking and being, nor the emphasis on reason and the excision of the body, but the tautological grammatical use of the first person: *I* think, [therefore] *I* am. The point for Goux is the possibility to describe human existence outside of the need to use the second person.[8]

The popularity of this formula has done more harm than good to Western thought, especially in its exclusions, its excising of not only emotions, but also the dependency of human life on others. I call it an *autistic* version of humanity, and deny it the universality it has come to claim – "after" Descartes, vulgarizing his statement, rather than following him. Étienne Balibar comes up with a subtler interpretation of the cogito. The productive complexity of Balibar's interpretation emerges from the fundamentally interdisciplinary thinking he practices, forging an "inter-ship" between

7 Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

8 Jean-Joseph Goux, *Oedipus Philosopher*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1990] 1994).

philosophy, political science and anthropology. This inter-ship in his thinking includes empathy. But Goux did seem to have a point. Concerning Descartes, I have interpreted his incapability to forge and sustain relationships as a symptom of his abandonment-complex neurosis, caused by trauma. For, it does require an explanation.[9]

Fig. 2: Thomas Germaine as René Descartes, *REASONABLE DOUBT*, 2016 by Mieke Bal (Cinema Suitcase) (photo: Przemo Wojciechowski).

The dependency on others is so obvious that it may well have been its inevitability that informed the desire to hold it at bay in the first place. From the baby's mother to social caretakers to linguistic second persons, this dependency has been articulated clearly in psychoanalysis, sociology, and linguistics: so much so, in fact, that being a second person seems more "natural" a definition of being human than anything else. Sufferers from an abandonment complex are handicapped in this respect. Hence, the tautology in the formula. Second-personhood, I contend, may well be the only and most important universal of human existence, while its repression underlies other universalist definitions. For this issue of universalism, on which more later, Louise Anthony has developed a universalist definition of humanity from a feminist perspective, avoiding the universalist-relativist trap.[10]

Second-personhood means that we cannot exist without others – in the eye of the other as in the eye of the storm (Berkeley, Beckett), as much as in sustenance of others. For the latter, empathy is called for. This is the ethical imperative to which Descartes, according to the vulgarised *cogito*, allegedly refuses to owe his existence. I see this differently. That is where I would start any attempt to confront universality as the ground where globalisation meets – allows, enables, or precludes – intimacy. I do this not to pursue the beating of the Cartesian dead horse,

9 Étienne Balibar, *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology* (New York: Fordham University Press, [2011] 2017), 55–73.

10 Louise Anthony, "'Human Nature' and Its Role in Feminist Theory," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. Janet A. Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 63–91.

but, on the contrary, to keep in mind the productivity of returning with "critical intimacy" to moments of the past, such as the dawn of rationalism in the seventeenth century. Descartes, who has so sorely missed intimacy in his early life, deserves to get a bit of it back from the twenty-first century.[11]

Fig. 3: Installation view of *Nothing is Missing*, 2006–2010 by Mieke Bal (Cinema Suitcase) (photo: Astrid van Weijenberg).

Before going on to your next question, just a few words on that concept that floats around in this conceptual turmoil: intimacy. Don't expect me to define it. Let me just say that intimacy is an aspect of second-personhood, which, in turn, is the blanket on which empathy lays. As follows from my discussion of Code, reading, listening and looking are practices of intimacy, not of love or passion, nor of hatred or irritation. For only reviewers actually read – or pretend to read – a book that rubs them the wrong way. People who read or look out of their own volition practice an activity in which friendship is the motor of response. Those reading otherwise would lay such a book aside, or wouldn't bother to go to an exhibition or concert. Let me stay with readability for a moment. Readability is an irritating but indispensable concept. In

11 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

interdisciplinary cultural analysis in particular, one is frequently confronted with the question of readability, and with the doubt as to how to impute unreadability to a publication or document. Is it one's own lack of fluency with another field, or is the writer at fault? It is not easy to acknowledge publicly that one finds a particular reading difficult, so it is easier to attribute the difficulty to the object. But, for a teacher, something important can be gained if one challenges that convention born out of intimidation.

Readability is best understood when the word refers not to degree but to mode. No two friendships are identical. But all are forms of critical intimacy. Let me be clear here. What is *unreadable* should not be read. In contrast, what is *difficult* may be worth exploring, in order to understand *what* readability is involved in reading it, and what one can learn from the effort. Degree and mode are not unrelated, but they are discontinuous.

Reading Mallarmé, as Barbara Johnson and Jacques Derrida demonstrated for me, is not the impossible and therefore ultimately ungratifying task it seemed to be when I first tried. Johnson offered me a mode of reading him. Don't try to follow his logic, follow his words, one after the other, chewing on each of them – was the implicit injunction in her own, demonstrative reading. The words multiply, spread out, disseminate, and coalesce again – other-wise. Instead of remaining dispersed, they end up forming a rhizome. Baudelaire, also a great poet, is easier to read, and becomes enjoyable right away. Not that you read everything right out of the poems, not that you don't want to reread them again and again. But, in terms of degree, Baudelaire's readability is greater than Mallarmé's. It is also different in terms of mode: in Baudelaire, the poetic and semantic aspects merge more easily. But it is also similar in that critical intimacy empowers readers to be critical, say, of elements that appear to convey misogyny or racism – the *négresse* Spivak discusses, the rigidification of female figures in Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" – without rejecting the text because of it.[12]

One trusts a friend. When you have a good friend, it is in your interest not to lose her or him. You "discuss" what appears painful, or problematic. You are eager to hear an explanation that makes the problematic element more acceptable. Or not; you can forgive a slip. Why would you do that? Because – and this is the important pedagogical moment of empathy – once the problem is explained as fully as possible, you can recognise in yourself similar sentiments, or slips. This is the moment when critical intimacy *teaches.* You learn. For learning is always, also, learning something about yourself and the *hic-et-nunc* in which you live.

12 Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

LC: You often mention "universalism" as one of the principal ambitions of your creative visual work. What do you think it entails? And why do you think it is a desirable goal?

MB: No. Here, a misunderstanding is lurking. I don't think universalism is an ambition of my creative visual work, nor of my more academic work. What I seek to avoid is to pit universalism against relativism. This would be a case of that binary thinking I spend my life combatting. Instead, although I consider human rights and certain social issues as universal, what I try to demonstrate in the work is both relationality and differentiation. Extending the relational understanding and the empathy it entails that I seek to foreground, propose, and promote, is not universalist. I do use, with a wink to Spivak's "strategic essentialism", the idea of "strategic universalism." With "strategic universalism" I mean a universalist treatment, analysis, and understanding of issues; not a belief in their unmovable universality. Of the many publications on the problem of universalism I recommend the final chapter of Balibar.[13]

Between the vexed notion of cultural difference with its risk of relativism, even potentially abused as an excuse for racism and ethnic profiling, on the one hand, and the claim or accusation of universalism attributed to the communication model, on the other hand, as I discuss in the third chapter of my book, and in the concrete proximity of the filmmakers with their interlocutors, the question of the ethical mandate of documentary-making, our responsibility required modesty and reticence. Instead of an impossible singularity of "speaker," the story of the documentary film

Fig. 4: Tarek Mehdi telling the story of his (then-)failed attempt to regulate his situation. Video still from *Mille et un jours*, 2002–2004. A film by Cinema Suitcase.

13 Étienne Balibar, *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology* (New York: Fordham University Press, [2011] 2017), 275–302.

Mille et un jours (2002–2004) demanded to be multi-voiced without universalism, with the singularity of each voice being audible, heard, and listened to.

This is a film on migration. And migration transgresses boundaries between cultures. Hence, thematically as well as structurally, it is not reducible to one specific culture. This entails a refusal of relativism. And avoiding ethnocentric Western biases, the film resists universalising concepts from the Western tradition such as voice. Instead, in the end of that chapter I offer a different kind of generalising as a potentially productive "strategic universalism". But to say that I promote universalism would be as misleading as the opposite claim, a partiality for relativism.

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Figures

Section B: **Writing Migration**

Frederike Middelhoff

Chapter 7
"The Most Outcast *Réfugié*!" Knowing Migration in Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *The Réfugié* (1824)

> A *réfugié* is an owl among crows. It is due to the lighting which may be wrong. But we poor *réfugiés* must be glad that the light of these strange regions illuminates us at all.[1]

German Romantic literature is rarely associated with the political migrations at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the early nineteenth centuries. However, as I argue in this chapter, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777–1843), one of the most prolific writers of the Romantic circles in Berlin, paid considerable attention to migrant realities around 1800 and creatively examined the backgrounds, forms and effects of forced migration[2] in the "Age of Revolutions."[3] My

1 "Ein Refugié ist nun ein Mal eine Eule unter den Krähen. Das liegt an der Beleuchtung. Sie mag falsch seyn. Aber wir armen Refugié's müssen doch nun ein Mal froh seyn, daß uns das Licht dieser fremdartigen Gegenden überhaupt nur beleuchtet." Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Der Refugié oder Heimath und Fremde. Ein Roman*, vol. 1 (Gotha, Erfurt: Hennings'sche Buchhandlung, 1824), reprinted in Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, *Sämtliche Romane und Novellenbücher*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Möhrig (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms, 1989), 430. All translations from the German are my own unless indicated otherwise.

2 Historiography has offered typological distinctions between various sorts of migration movements (for the time under investigation in this article and beyond cf., for example, Jochen Oltmer, *Migration. Vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2016), esp. 4–5. I understand forced migration [Gewaltmigration] as the "coercion to special mobility which seems to entail no alternative means of action." Jochen Oltmer, *Migration: Geschichte und Zukunft der Gegenwart* (Darmstadt: Theiss, 2017), 34. Along with Jan C. Jansen I also use "refugees" and "exiles" to refer to a broad concept which is closely connected to the administrative and political use of the terms in the early nineteenth century; it encompasses "(political) refugees as persons who stay in one or more host countries due to negative political actions or extradition in countries of origin." Jan C. Jansen, "Flucht und Exil im Zeitalter der Revolutionen: Perspektiven einer atlantischen Flüchtlingsgeschichte (1770er–1820er Jahre)," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 44.4 (2018): 501.

3 While historiographic research until recent decades has regarded refugees as a side effect and marginal phenomenon of the Atlantic Revolutions (primarily in North America, Spanish America, France and Haiti), various studies in recent years have examined and brought to the fore the transatlantic entanglements of refugee movements around 1800, and the intricate connections to other migratory movements in this period; cf., for example, *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, eds. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New York: Palgrave

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reading takes Fouqué's novel *Der Refugié oder Heimath und Fremde* (*The Réfugié or Home and Exile*), published in three volumes in 1824, as a case in point: A descendent of French Huguenot refugees (*réfugiés*) himself,[4] Fouqué mediates knowledges about and intertwines different (hi)stories of migration. Telling the story of the Gautier family,[5] whose pastor lineage can be traced back to the Huguenots, Fouqué interrelates his own migratory background with contemporary issues faced by the Huguenot diaspora in Prussia, the quests for (national) belonging and the expulsion politics around 1800.

"The *Réfugié*," as Fouqué himself noted, is an "illustration of the inner and outer status [*Stellung*] of the religious refugees or rather their descendants"[6]: the novel (re)envisions the last decades of the eighteenth and the first years of the nineteenth century, focusing especially on the period of the French occupation of German territories until the end of the First French Empire in 1814/15, and outlines the trials and tribulations of Robert Gautier, the son of the family, to explore issues of migrant identity and of belonging in the "siècle of exiles."[7] Despite its sentimental, moralising, verbose character and its archaic views, which has been criticised by both Fouqué's contemporaries and literary scholarship since its publication,[8] the novel offers productive insights into the question of knowledges

Macmillan, 2010); Delphine Diaz, "From Exile to Refugee: Toward a Transnational History of Refuge in Early Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Yearbook of Transnational History* (2021): 1–26.

4 Cf. for Fouqué's aristocratic family background and his biography see Arno Schmidt's somewhat literary, empathetic and at times factually twisted account: Arno Schmidt, *Fouqué und einige seiner Zeitgenossen* (Bargfeld: Frühling, 1993). Schmidt instructively points to how Fouqué's childhood and military experiences have become part of *The Réfugié* (cf. Schmidt, *Fouqué*, 41, 83, 191, 269, 484–485). See also Katja Diegmann-Hornig, *'Sich in die Poesie zu flüchten, wie in unantastbare Eilande der Seeligen': Analysen zu ausgewählten Romanen von Friedrich Baron de la Motte Fouqué* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms, 1999), 98–99.

5 I am grateful to Jana Kittelmann for pointing out that Fouqué's fictive Gautier family might have been inspired by the Huguenot family Gualtieri, members of which served as pastors in and beyond Berlin. As I am not focussing on the biographical links between Fouqué's life and his works, however, I am not following the trail of connections to the Gualtieris.

6 Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, *Lebensgeschichte des Baron Friedrich de La Motte Fouqué* (Halle: Schwetschke und Sohn, 1840), 360.

7 Sylvie Aprile, *Le siècle des exiles: Bannis et proscrits, de 1789 à la Commune* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010).

8 Critics have found fault with the overt patriotic-aristocratic didactics and the sanctimonious, at times mawkish tones of the texts; they have also discredited Fouqué's preoccupation with medieval settings and characters (knights in shining armour and damsels in distress), which he – according to his critics, unsuccessfully – connects to contemporary events. In this respect, he has been accused of royalism and reactionism. Cf., for example, Diegmann-Hornig, *Sich in die Poesie zu flüchten*, 105, or Christa Elisabeth Seibicke, *Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué: Krise und Verfall der Spätromantik im Spiegel seiner historisierenden Ritterromane* (Munich: tuduv, 1985), 66.

about French exile/s and Franco-German relations in the "Age of Emigrations."[9] Fouqué participates in the creation of a *réfugié* "myth," a euphemistic image "of the morally staunch and faithful Huguenot,"[10] an elected people serving as a role model for Prussian/German identity, but also gives voice and face to migrant suffering around 1800. In a fictional account which investigates the various challenges of migrant existence in the "so-called age of revolutions,"[11] Fouqué's "novel of the newer times" [*Roman aus der neuern Zeit*], as the subtitle reads, revises the "success story"[12] of Huguenot historiography and brings to the fore the political, religious and emotional struggle of refugees in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

In order to show how Fouqué – in his "idiosyncratic combination of poesy and truth"[13] – articulates (hi)stories of migration and the different narrative responses to expulsion, I will first investigate how the novel negotiates *réfugié* realities in German-speaking countries during the coalition wars, before exploring the ways in which Fouqué ponders the future of Franco-German allegiance via narratives of exile.

Superior Outcasts? Reconfiguring the *Refuge* in *The Réfugié*

Of the more than one hundred and fifty thousand members of the Reformed Church of France (about a fifth of the early-modern French population) who escaped after Louis XIV had revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had granted religious freedom to Calvinist protestants, on 18 October 1685, it is estimated that

9 Friedemann Pestel, "The Age of Emigrations: French Émigrés and Global Entanglements of Political Exile," in *French Emigrants in Revolutionised Europe: Connected Histories and Memories*, eds. Laure Philip and Juliette Reboul (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 205.

10 Anne Thiez, *Identität und Sprachidentität von Hugenottennachfahren: Eine identitätstheoretische und gesprächsanalytische Untersuchung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 17.

11 Jan C. Jansen, "Aliens in a Revolutionary World: Refugees, Migration Control and Subjecthood in the British Atlantic, 1790s–1820s," *Past & Present* (2021): 3. Jansen suggests that further research is needed to understand the transnational effects of refugeeism in the Atlantic world around 1800: "scholars have been slow to recognize that the movements of loyalists, émigrés, exiles and refugees were as much a defining feature of this era as the circulation of revolutionaries and their ideas" (Jansen, "Aliens," 3–4).

12 Susanne Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa und Nordamerika. Migration und Integration in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2019), 498.

13 Schmidt, *Fouqué und seine Zeitgenossen*, 23.

around forty thousand of these "so-called *réfugiés*"[14] settled in German-speaking territories. Most of these refugees (around twenty thousand) decided to stay in Prussia, where Fouqué's story is set (and where Fouqué spent most of his life).[15] Fouqué's ancestors were among the many families who had been torn apart in the course of this event.[16] Prussia was under Protestant rule and welcomed the refugees from France for economic and biopolitical reasons: They were valuable subjects pledging allegiance to the Prussian state and expected to dedicate themselves to work and faith (only), thus boosting the strained economic structures of the state still recovering from the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War. The *réfugiés* were granted special rights and privileges, in terms of tax dues, for instance; as *corps de refuge*, they were allowed to settle in separate "colonies"[17] (the Berlin colony being one of the biggest and most well-known)[18] with their own jurisdictions, their own administrations and their own churches.[19] When Fouqué, as a third-generation Huguenot, published *The Réfugié* more than a hundred years after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenot diaspora in the so-called *refuge* had assimilated and transformed in such significant terms that conservative "hardliners" felt their special status (chosen by God *and* by the great elector

14 Ursula Fuhrich-Grubert, "Minoritäten in Preußen: Die Hugenotten als Beispiel," in *Handbuch der Preussischen Geschichte*, vol. 1, eds. Wolfgang Neugebauer and Frank Kleinehagenbrock (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 1161.

15 Ute Lotz-Heumann, "Confessional Migration of the Reformed: The Huguenots," http://www.ieg-ego.eu/lotzheumannu-2012-en, translated by Niall Williams, *European History Online* (EGO), ed. Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), 14 July 2012 (26 January 2022). Andre Jainchill reminds us that "Huguenot exiles [. . .] gave 'first circulation' to the term 'refugees'." Andre Jainchill, "1685 and the French Revolution," in *French Revolution in Global Perspective*, eds. Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 57.

16 While Fouqué's great-grandfather left France with two other brothers, their sister and another brother remained (and died) in France. Cf. Schmidt, *Fouqué und einige seiner Zeitgenossen*, 16–17.

17 The colony had its own rules and regulations that were distinct from Prussian laws: "that is why the term 'colony' in the German refuge rather meant the shared juridical and administrative realm than a special geographical space." Thiez, *Identität und Sprachidentität*, 18.

18 Cf. Jürgen Wilke, "Zur Geschichte der französischen Kolonie," in *Hugenotten in Berlin*, ed. Gottfried Bregulla (Berlin: Union, 1988), 54–87.

19 Susanne Lachenicht, "Renaissance in der Diaspora? Hugenottische Migration und Identität (en) im 'Refuge,'" in *Religion und Mobilität: Zum Verhältnis von raumbezogener Mobilität und religiöser Identitätsbildung im frühneuzeitlichen Europa*, eds. Thomas Weller and Henning Jürgens (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 172.

Friedrich Wilhelm)[20] had come under immense pressure. Fearing disintegration and a loss of French-Reformed virtues as well as "the otherness of the *réfugiés*" and their privileged position in Prussia (as *Réfugié*-Prussians), intellectual elites of the *corps de refuge* started to create and popularise "narratives of Huguenots identity and superiority [Auserwähltheit]."[21] The "Huguenots' history myths" were a "conservative appeal to the French-Reformed *nation* in Prussia,"[22] conceived to unite and commit the *réfugiés* to both their Huguenot ancestry and their special destiny. Crafting these legendary narratives meant that (hi)stories of conflict with the governments and social communities of the host countries, as well as any economic hardships faced in the *refuges*, were eradicated from the books and minds of Huguenot identity.[23] According to Étienne François, this carefully constructed Huguenot myth-making included three main points: the martyrdom of being forced to emigrate from France; the hagiographical depiction of Huguenot characters and identity; and the *topos* of the hard-working Huguenot.[24] These "legends" and "new narratives for group identity," I argue, were not only conceived and promoted in historical accounts written by Huguenots and their ancestors – as can be seen, for example, in the nine volumes of *Mémoires pour server à l'histoire des réfugies françois dans les états du Roi du Prusse* (1782–1799),[25] edited by Jean-Pierre Erman and Pierre Christian Frédéric Reclam – but also in the fiction of Fouqué.[26] Yet *The Réfugié* is not only telling a *réfugié* story in order to contour and (re)write Huguenot virtues, but also makes visible the identity crises and communal conflicts which Huguenot historiography actually tried to obliter-

20 Cf. Fouqué, *Der Refugié*, vol. 2, 331: "einem Nachkommen jener Glaubensflüchtlinge, die Friedrich so schön zu lieben und zu beschirmen verstand" [a descendent of those religious refugees who Friedrich knew how to love and protect so beautifully].

21 Lachenicht, "Renaissance in der Diaspora," 182. Cf. also Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa*, 496.

22 Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa*, 497. Emphasis in the original.

23 Cf. Thiez, *Identität und Sprachidentität*, 17.

24 Étienne François, "La mémoire huguenote en Hesse, en Allemagne et dans les autres pays du *Refuge*," in *Die Hugenotten und das Refuge: Deutschland und Europa. Beiträge zu einer Tagung*, eds. Frédéric Hartweg and Stefi Jersch-Wenzel (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1990), 233–239, as cited and translated in Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa*, 499.

25 The fact that Huguenot mythmaking, as François, Lachenicht and others have pointed out, is still handed down, promoted and updated today can for example be seen in Horsta Krum, *Preußens Adoptivkinder: Die Hugenotten. 300 Jahre Edikt von Potsdam. Unter Verwendung von 'Mémoires pour server à l'histoire des réfugiés François dans les état du roi' von J. P. Erman und F. Reclam 1782–1799* (Berlin: arani, 1985).

26 Apart from *The Réfugié*, Fouqué also wrote about refugees in other texts and was occupied with other refugee stories at that time. Cf. Schmidt, *Fouqué*, 484.

ate. In this respect, Fouqué's novel is part of but also undermines the narrative regime of Huguenot historiography.

The novel's concern for *réfugié* identity against the background of assimilation, for national belonging and (post-)migrant suffering amidst the Francophobic climate of the Napoleonic era already features prominently at the beginning of the novel. The text introduces the "pastor of *Lindenhorst*,"[27] the father of the Gautier family sitting idyllically in front of his house on a Sunday evening, when he is seen and spoken about by farmers passing by. It is telling that the pastor is introduced via a characterisation of the "native" population: the text thus indicates from the very start that the Gautier family is regarded from the outside and as "other." Gautier is referred to as "a proper example for all preachers [. . .], our Mr. Jottjé!" (R I, 2). The accented foreignness of the family name is a sign of the status of the Gautiers as being both stranger and estranged, renowned and respected but also remote in the social community of Lindenhorst, as the narrator swiftly explains:

> This is how they were used to pronouncing the French name Gautier according to their north German dialect; they had grown accustomed to this sound for as long as anyone could remember, since it had been more than two hundred years since Mr. Gautier's forefathers had fled from France due to religious persecution and settled in this mountainous area. His forefathers had been clerics as well but only in their so-called *réfugié* colony [Refugié-Colonie]. Mr. Gautier was the first who had accepted the call to become a German preacher. (R I, 2)

Right from the outset, in line with its subtitle "Roman aus der neuern Zeit," the novel demonstrates its status as historical fiction: Both refugee background as well as the process of Huguenot dis/integration into German society are addressed in the opening scene. Gautier appears as symbol of Huguenot assimilation, epitomised in both the praise regarding his preaching skills and the amalgamated (mis)pronunciation and spelling of his name by the local population.[28] The Gautier family thus appears materially settled (house, job, religious community ties) in the Harz Mountain village but is still marked as "other."

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27 Fouqué, *Der Refugié*, vol. 1, 2. In the following, I will reference the novel with the acronym "R" together with the number of the volume (I–III) and the page number(s) behind the quote.

28 Linguistic research has shown that Huguenot diasporas affected the languages of their host regions and also saw the multilingualism of the Huguenots become transformed. Cf. Manuela Böhm, "Sociolinguistics of the Huguenot Communities in German-Speaking Territories," in *A Companion to the Huguenots*, eds. Raymond A. Mentzer and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 291–322.

Issues of identity via the question "What's in a name?"[29] become even more prominent when the narrator mentions Gautier's son Robert in the local Franco-Germanic parlance, as "the little Monsieur Jottjé as they called the son of the pastor" (R I, 3), and Robert then makes a personal appearance at his father's house bringing bad news from school. Robert has a "tear-stained and bewildered look" (R I, 10) and relates how he fled[30] from school after he had gotten into a fight trying to "defend" "the name Gautier" (R I, 11). Robert's account of the events at school makes evident the fact that his German classmates have been bullying and beating him due to his name and Huguenot heritage:

> "You don't want to be called Jottjé, boy? Very well! We will call you according to the spelling of your name. But we won't pronounce it in French. We don't have to do that, we good German boys! [. . .] We'll pronounce you in German, as your name is written. And then you are called Gau-thier!" "The Gau-thier!" they all shouted jubilantly. "Yes, yes, the Gauthier shall be his name henceforth." (R I, 25)

The novel pinpoints discourses of exclusion and issues of ièclezation when Robert's peers make him "other" as a "foreign species" – "Gau-thier" (a composition consisting of the two German nouns "Gau" and "Thier") literally translated means "country-animal". Apparently, Robert's French ancestors had suffered similar hostile treatment from the locals when they settled under German rule and were being favoured by state sovereigns.[31] Yet the novel does not reserve a special focus for the Gautier forefathers or their means of making themselves at home in Prussia. Pastor Gautier indeed mentions how his Huguenot ancestors not only had to emigrate from their Normandy home after "many a heavy persecution" (R I, 41) but that they also chose to leave behind their "ancient knightly origin" (R I, 43), represented by the name of Langallerie.[32] Yet the pastor's story breaks off at the point when his

29 Cf. the novel's repeated reference to the issue of naming and the "creation of the image of a human being once you hear his/her name," (R I, 37) as well as the text's eschatological stance that "in the hereafter, we all receive new names" (R III, 403).

30 The text negotiates different semantic dimensions of flight and refuge when the narrator first introduces the reader to the Huguenot refugee legacy of the Gautiers and then has the pastor call his son "a fugitive" in the sense of a "deserter," a person on the run: "Dear God, my son, a fugitive [Flüchtling]! Someone by the name of Gautier, a fugitive" (R I, 11); cf. Johann Christoph Adelung, "Flüchtling," in *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart* vol. 2, ed. Johann Christoph Adelung (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Compagnie, 1793–1801), 226.

31 For a historical reconstruction of the "harsh rejection" and "openly discriminating behaviour" the Huguenots encountered when they tried to settle in Germany, see Andreas Reinke, "Die Kehrseite der Privilegierung: Proteste und Widerstände gegen die Hugenottische Niederlassung in den Deutschen Territorialstaaten," *Comparativ* 7.5/6 (1997): 39–55.

32 As Schmidt (*Fouqué*, 484) remarks, the name "Langallerie" can be found in Fouqué's family tree.

forefathers found themselves at the right-hand side shores of the Rhine "in full safety" (R I, 41): Conflicts between locals and foreigners are not spoken about in detail.[33] In contrast, Fouqué's novel not only repeatedly revolves around Robert's Francophobic experiences and his (eventually only partially successful)[34] quest for belonging to Prussia as a patriot and "Prussian *citoyen*[]"[35] but also dwells on the enmities prevailing against and the persecution suffered by third- and fourth-generation Huguenot refugees from members of both French and Prussian societies, and intertwines these issues with reflections on forced migration.

When Robert's hometown in the Harz Mountains is invaded by Napoleonic troops, his identity conflict exacerbates. Addressed as "still enough French [. . .], little *réfugié*," by a French officer who demands to be accommodated by the Gautier family, Robert highlights his self-image as German: "Of course, I am German on my mother's side, and my father is proud to say that he has also already become German [. . .]; dear sir, even if you perhaps cannot understand how great a joy it is to be German, do not mock those to whom God has given such an uplifting feeling." (R I, 183–189) Robert clings to his faith in God and believes in his divine feelings of being German, a Prussian partisan-citizen to be precise: "Dear Lord, I praise you and rejoice that I am a human being! Also for the fact that I am German! But also for the fact that I am Prussian!" (R II, 53).[36] Yet time and again the novel brings to the fore that this belief is neither firm nor undisturbed. Just like his father – whom it pains to hear his fellow-brethren speak with "wild-tempered, spiteful, unfortunately often crude outbursts [. . .] on everything that was called French" and who acknowledges that "nobody can get rid of his original roots" (R I, 211–212) – Robert's loyalty to the Prussian state and his plea for German integrity are repeatedly challenged. His feeling of being "'*Outside*'" (R II, 285), of not belonging among his fellow students (at the university), to the aristocratic circles of these fellows or to his comrades-in-arms (in military service) all become tantamount when he enlists to fight against Napoleon's troops. Stationed in a village where "a bunch of poor refugees

33 Father Gautier sketches how his forefathers buried the arms and certificates that could identify them as members of the Langallerie family (and adopted the "ancient Christian name of the family: *Gautier*" (R I, 45–46)) but refrains from going into detail about what has happened after the escape. He only hints at "many painful aspects in the lives of my fathers" (R I, 33).

34 Robert dies "for Prussia" in a battle against Napoleon shortly after he has learnt his "real" name. Shortly after his death is announced to the parents, his father dies ending the (patriarchal) Langallerie lineage.

35 Pestel, "Age of Emigrations," 209–210.

36 Robert defines himself as both "ein Deutscher und ein Preuße" (a German and a Prussian), "weil das am schönsten für mich paßt" [because this suits me best] (R II, 53); cf., in this respect, Fouqué's self-description as "Refugié [. . .] und als Preuße seit meinem Großvater her" [a *réfugié* [. . .] and as Prussian since my grandfather]. Fouqué, *Lebensgeschichte*, 155.

[armer Flüchtlinge]" of German origin relate the "horrors" (R, III 150) they have suffered when the French raided and looted their towns, scenes of war from which they have only narrowly escaped, Robert is confronted with the French (family) ghosts of his past: the "wrath" and "fury" of the German refugees and the people listening to the atrocities committed by the French "enemy" (R III, 151) result in the proclamation that "whatever bears a French name is appalling and abominable in Germany for all time, and every French sound in the liberated lands must be forbidden" (R III, 152). Robert is dismayed by the furious call against French names and subjects: "Robert Gautier grew paler and paler. In this distraught moment, he hardly knew clearly for what cause he had actually gone out to fight. Or his fencing for the peaceful German cause suddenly seemed to him like a kind of gruesome suicide." (R III, 152) Although his compatriot Kraus takes his side and defends both Robert's name and his origin against any reproach of "buonapartism" (R III, 156) – "rejoice in the brave *réfugiés*" (R III, 156) – Robert's feeling of being (made) different remains. It becomes apparent that the degradation and bullying he has been subjected to throughout his youth keep haunting him even in his sleep: In one of his nightmares, he finds himself in a battle, when suddenly his horse turns and takes him away from the battlefield

> away and further away, into the most shameful, most ignominious flight, and [. . .] scornful voices were calling from all sides: "Jottjé, where the hell are you going?" – and sometimes, as if laughing, from the enemy's side: "Monsieur le Marquis de Langallerie! Halt! Is this then the illustrious bravery, which you have inherited from your invincible ancestors? Halt, Monsieur le Marquis!" (R III, 145)

The novel desperately tries to make Robert – confronted with the need to fight against the French – known as a character who has been deeply and lastingly upset by social marginalisation and who is constantly trying to negotiate his French ancestry on the one hand and his Prussian-German national belonging and state of mind on the other. Against this background, Robert's self-stylisation as a "victim" (or his self-victimisation), which he connects to his Huguenot background, cannot only be read in the context of a Huguenot need to manage the aftermath of the French Revolution as a definite "break with former home country [France]," or as part of the work of a "collective memory making a hero of the fathers"[37] of the Huguenot diaspora at a time of social and cultural disintegration. Fouqué's story rather suggests that Robert has also fled into the "vocabulary of victimhood"[38] to

37 François, cited in Lachenicht, *Hugenotten in Europa*, 498–499.

38 David van der Linden, "Histories of Martyrdom and Suffering in the Huguenot Diaspora," in *A Companion to the Huguenots*, eds. Raymond A. Mentzer and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 350.

cope with and meet the expectations of his father and forefathers as well as the rejections of the Germans. It is with the painful feeling of being (made) an outsider that Robert starts to embrace his singular but distinct status as *réfugié* and to conceive his identity as both Huguenot "outcast" and Prussian patriot – a social imaginary commonly referenced in historical research as "Huguenot borussophilia."[39] This self-image is passed down by patrilineage but also reinforced by Robert's peers: from the outset of the novel, his father insists on a special *réfugié* status – "old Frankish" [altfränkisch] – and even more: "old French ancestral glory" [altfranzösische Ahnenherrlichkeit] (R II, 214), in contrast to the "new" French invaders – until his very last breath.[40] Instilled with a belief in the divine order, in Providence as well as the providential distinction of *réfugié* identity, Robert adopts the role of Huguenot martyrdom and renunciation: "My people and I were born to be at a standstill in this world; you are called to walk over it. And we will be happy if you remember one or the other *réfugié* body that helped pave your way to a more comfortable march forward!" (R II, 352) Considering himself an eternally "homeless person" [Heimathloser] (R II, 355) without any "relations," a sort of foreign object "blown in like a snowflake from a completely different country" (R II, 356), Robert sees himself as the walking dead: a person "akin to a corpse" (R II, 355) living a sad, lonely life,[41] a life "like someone buried alive!" (R II, 360). In his melancholic-fatalistic view (which foreshadows his "sacrificial" death on the battlefield against Napoleon), Robert likens his homeless life to the image of the Eternal Jew, characterised by "a dismal wandering" (R II, 362) that can only be endured thanks to God.[42] In this respect, Robert distinguishes himself as outsider after he has been repeatedly reminded that he has to act as "real *réfugié* son" who has to suffer in the same way as "his forefathers" (R II, 332). It is a continual honing in on *réfugié* identity that results in Robert's self-stylisation as both distinguished and stigmatised: "Let us *réfugiés* do what we can, and do not reproach us for doing it differently than you." (R II, 364).

Robert's socialisation means an internalisation of the experiences of being humiliated and cast as outsider. Even his best friend Heinrich, enflamed by the

39 Fuhrich-Grubert, "Minoritäten in Preußen," 1212. Cf. Sam Seitz, "French Huguenots in Berlin: Acculturation and Nationalism," https://politicstheorypractice.wordpress.com/2019/03/24/french-huguenots-in-berlin-acculturation-and-nationalism/#comments, *Politics in Theory and Practice*, 24 March 2019 (28 January 2022): "The traditional German narrative lauds the Huguenots for their Borussophilia, devotion to the Hohenzollerns, elite sophistication, and cultural contributions."

40 Cf. R III, 402.

41 See, for example, R II, 356–357.

42 Cf., for instance, R II, 362.

salvation campaign of "suppressed Germany" (R II, 283), is unable to see his friend for who he is – a comrade fighting against the French and for "the German cause" – and thus reveals his prejudiced, Francophobic attitude: "What a pity, such a beautiful soul! But those who are not rooted in the German land on their father's and their mother's side can never feel the great matter in a proper, serious way!" (R II, 308)

Robert is made to feel different and eventually accepts his otherness. As he is being reminded by his family and friends (as well as the narrator)[43] that, as "poor *réfugié*," he remains "an owl amongst crows" (R II, 430), a "foreign species" "not rooted" (R II, 308) in "German lands," it comes as no surprise that he incorporates the metaphoric expression of being uprooted when he identifies with an uprooted poplar tree.[44] The novel shows that Robert eventually takes pride in his *réfugié* status as both distinguished and despaired, a "bad faith" that he manages to turn into a perspective of self-esteem: "The poor, uprooted refugee is already humiliated enough by others. He does not need to also drown himself in soft tears" (R II, 339–340). The novel demonstrates that it is not only the patriarchal narrative of Huguenot persecution of more than a hundred years ago, but also the suffering inflicted by Robert's German peers in post-revolutionary times of conflict with France that have played a significant role in transforming Robert Gautier into a staunch *réfugié* and Prussian patriot: an ultimately tragic character who is unable to connect to a life in dialogue and happiness with others. Seeking comfort and belonging, he embraces a divine cause as (eternal) refugee, coming home only in death; that is, in the afterlife.[45]

Expulsion and Displacement: Lives in Exile

Fouqué's novel not only empathetically investigates how Francophobic attitudes and German nationalism co-emerge and affect Huguenot refugee (hi)stories, but also explores the entanglements of various displacements and the complex challenges of

43 Fouqué's narrator aligns with and tries to evoke sympathy for Robert Gautier in various instances, cf., for example: "Each of us, thank God, has similar memories from our earthly lives, and similar forebodings for the future. Everyone! And even if he were the most unhappy and most unknown [der Allerunglücklichste und Allerverkannteste] on earth! – The most outcast *réfugié* [allerausgestoßenste Refugié]!" (R II, 392–393).

44 Cf. R II, 287.

45 "Foreign and home – he felt it – on earth, the two are always in wondrous interplay, [. . .] both pointing the way to our eternal home [ewige Heimath]!" (R II, 381).

exiled lives in the "age of refugees."[46] As mentioned before, the novel contributes to Huguenot myth-making but also shows how Robert Gautier comes to cling to the image of a victimised but distinguished Huguenot identity only after he is both indoctrinated by his father and repeatedly subjected to humiliation by his peers. The novel thus conveys knowledge about the history of confessional refugeeism in France – the Huguenots featuring "Mr. Gautier's forefathers, fled from France due to religious persecution" (R I, 2) – but also negotiates a more recent history and a more contemporary memory of flight and exile in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Imagining the lives of the Gautiers, Fouqué brings into dialogue multiple (hi)stories of displacement and the means of sustaining life in exile. Considering the migratory fates of people who have suffered persecution due to their beliefs, and social and political affiliations, Fouqué fosters alliances between different exile (hi)stories and biographies, which I will sketch in the following: the Gautier family (1), the theologian Paul Gerhardt (2), the French *émigrés* (3) and the *réfugiés* in the Berlin colony (4). The novel thus not only offers sympathetic views on French migrants from the past and the present, but also interlinks forced migrations of the French to German (hi)stories of exile and examines the creative role of literature in remembering migration and transregional alliances for the sake of a peaceful European future.

(1) Fouqué's novel installs the Gautiers as a prism that brings other exiles into view. Robert's self-image as a Huguenot refugee becomes even more persistent when the Gautiers are confronted with the French invasion of their hometown in the Harz Mountains. As soon as it has become clear that the provinces on the west side of the Elbe have been "handed over" (R I, 242) to the French, Robert – appealing to his father – envisions political exile, connecting the prospect of emigration to both his ancestors and the biblical Exodus: "Father, we are *réfugiés* through our fathers. Why not become so a second time through our own pious resolve? The Lord led our fathers out of Egypt [. . .] before us also lies the heavenly Canaan, which we are called to seize as our fathers did." (R I, 253–254) While the pastor decides to remain in town to support his communion, the situation changes when the new government not only removes the pastor from office but also expels the Gautiers from their home: "To put it briefly: You are dispelled, my friend, and banished to the right bank of the Elbe. And so – be gone and get away!" (R I, 268). Just like their forefathers, the Gautiers are not tolerated in a

46 Maya Jasanoff, "Revolutionary Exiles: The American Loyalist and French Emigre Diasporas," in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840*, eds. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37–58.

political landscape that has changed overnight and has transformed them into "emigrants" [Auswandernde] (R I, 279), "displaced persons" [Vertriebene] (R I, 285). Opening the letters of recommendation written by the pastor's supporters, his wife is confronted with the vocabulary of exile that has suddenly become part of their identity – again – as history repeats itself: "Oh Jottjé, here someone calls you *exsul* in all his great love and admiration! And *exsul* – I still understand that much Latin – *exsul*, that means an emigrant, a displaced person, an *émigré* [ein Ausgewanderter, ein Vertriebner, ein Emigrant]!" (R I, 293–294). The pastor responds to his wife's despair first by connecting their fate to the genealogy of exile within the family line, and secondly to the case of the Lutheran minister Paul Gerhardt, whom Gautier stylises as another exiled subject. In this respect, Gautier seeks to find and take solace in narratives of migration: Instead of adopting the designation "*exsul*," he embraces the identity as *réfugié*. To his wife he thus replies: "'A *réfugié*!' Mr. Gautier answered and smiled mildly. "'Shall I moan and whine just because I have become what my honourable fathers had also been?'" (R I, 293). Gautier proposes walking in the shoes of his forefathers: clinging to family tradition, he makes sense of the verdict of expulsion and takes pride in his heritage. As he notices that his family, and his wife especially, is in need of comfort, however, he adds another migratory narrative to the family's refugee story.

(2) Comparing the conditions and effects of displacement to the circumstances that brought about the change of domain in Paul Gerhardt's life (1607–1676), Gautier imagines migration for consolatory purposes. Gerhardt, a staunch Lutheran preacher, Berlin court chaplain and poet, whose hymns and poems, set to music by J.S. Bach, are still part of Protestant song books today, abstained from signing an edict issued by the Elector of Brandenburg.[47] Gerhardt, unwilling to both accept syncretism at church and subordination to royal demands, was removed from office in 1666 and shortly after left for a post in Lübben (Saxony). In contrast to the Gautiers, however, Gerhardt had not been officially expelled from Brandenburg. Yet pastor Gautier transforms Gerhardt into both a displaced and betrayed fellow refugee:

> The one who drives us away is a foreign, imposed man, completely unknown to us, for whom there is no appeal in our souls other than that of human love in general. But the one who drove Paul Gerhardt away was his sovereign and elector, whom he greatly admired

47 Cf. Waltraud-Ingeborg Sauer-Geppert, "Gerhardt, Paul," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 6., ed. Historische Kommission, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1964), 286–288.

> and loved with all his heart, and before whom he felt an innate reverence in his deepest heart. (R I, 302–303)

Gautier imagines Gerhardt as both refugee and migrant poet whose songs instil confidence and hope in other exiles, including the Gautiers.[48] According to Gautier's version of (hi)story, exile was vital and productive to Gerhardt as both a preacher and a poet: if the "good, displaced preacher" had not been "very worried" about his future, "Gerhardt would not have been able to compose the song" (R I, 309). Displacement is envisaged as a source of creative production, a dismal situation that is both being coped with and metamorphoses into art.

Yet as Robert's father elaborates upon the similarities between Gerhardt and the Gautiers, he finds himself questioned over the ornamentation and the personal "twist" he adds to the story of Gerhardt's life.[49] His wife complains: "You have told the story in its smallest detail, and yet you cannot know it so precisely. How would it be if you [. . .] met the dear preacher in heaven, and he said: 'well, dear colleague, the thing happened quite differently, and I know how to tell it to you much better!'" (R I, 321). Gautier defends his spin on the story by refering to the freedom of art and poetry on the one hand, and to a divine inspiration informing poetic creation on the other hand:

> Behold, my friend, the much-used word 'poet' means in its ancient Hellenic origin as much as 'one who creates something'. But we poets, with our little mirrors – [. . .] we must not be afraid of the mirror beam of the eternal creator. Even if our little images melt and fade away before His glorious formations, well then, in all of us seeking Christians (as St. Paul writes) the Lord's clarity is reflected with unveiled face from eternity to eternity. Hallelujah! (R I, 323)

Addressing the Platonic credo "all poets lie," which his wife touches upon, Gautier endorses his refugee story as authentic if not true – a creation of the mind reflecting and catering to God's eternal truth and inspiring confidence in those listening to and identifying with the story.

(3) But the novel tells yet another refugee story, which reflects on how the French Revolution effected the displacement and dispossession of various (innocent) individuals across both France and Germany. Before Napoleon's troops invaded German territory, around 150,000 people – most of them with clerical and/or aristocratic background – had already fled from France after the Jacobine seizure of power. The

48 Cf. R I, 295, 298–301.

49 Gautier imagines Paul Gerhardt on the run from the authorities with his "female companion," (R I, 318) although Gerhardt's wife had actually died before the preacher left Brandenburg.

departure of these so-called *émigrés* has been acknowledged as "the first instance of political emigration on a European, if not indeed a global, scale."[50] Right from the start of the novel, Fouqué suggests and promotes alliances between *réfugiés* and *émigrés* – Huguenots who fled from France in the seventeenth century and French elites, clerics and monarchists leaving the country amidst and in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The narrator introduces and positively describes the only person supporting Robert and defending him against the bullying of his schoolmates: "the brave emigrant Roussillac, [. . .] master of language and fencing in one person" (R I, 21).[51] Scholarship has pointed out that *réfugiés* and *émigrés* came into contact when the latter went into exile in German territories.[52] Until recently it has been claimed that these contacts usually resulted in conflicts, yet new findings suggest that *réfugiés* and *émigrés* often met on friendly terms and supported each other in exile, recognising their shared (hi)stories of displacement.[53]

Although Roussillac is not a main character of the story, his appearance at the beginning and the end of the novel suggests his significance as a figure both framing and embodying issues of migration. The favourable depiction of the *émigré* representative makes evident the sympathetic stance of the novel towards those French aristocrats forced to live in exile while also fighting against Napoleon and for the freedom of the German people. Thus, at the end of the novel, both confessional and national differences have dissolved for ideological reasons and the joint venture of opposing Napoleonic rule. As comrades-in-arms, Robert and Roussillac find common ground not only in their migrant backgrounds, but first and foremost in the context of a war for "our heart of Europe, our beloved Germany" (R III, 328). To his parents, Robert writes about the joint preparation

50 Friedemann Pestel, "French Revolution and Migration after 1789," http://www.ieg-ego.eu/pestelf-2017-en, *European History Online*, ed. Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), 11 July 2017 (20 December 2022).; see among others also Thomas Höpel, *Emigranten der Französischen Revolution in Preußen 1789–1806: Eine Studie in vergleichender Perspektive* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2000); Friedemann Pestel, *Weimar als Exil: Erfahrungsräume französischer Revolutionsemigranten 1792–1803* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009).

51 Although not explicit, the novel suggests that Roussillac is an *émigré* – rather than an economic migrant who has sought work in Germany as a schoolteacher. Cf. also the similarities between Roussilac and the "dignified emigrant" or the "brave emigrant, Mr. Bousmard, former Prussian engineer" whom Fouqué describes in his autobiography (Fouqué, *Lebensgeschichte*, 165, 274).

52 Cf. Pestel, "Age of Emigrations," 208; Jansen "Flucht und Exil," 503.

53 Cf. Réné-Marc Pille, "Chamisso und die Berliner Hugenotten: Eine Beziehung zwischen Emigration und Refuge," *Comparativ* 7.5/6 (1997): 142; Pestel, "Age of Emigrations," 209–210: "[W]e can conclude that although the arrival of the *émigrés* questioned the peculiar ideas of Huguenot belonging as 'Prussian *citoyens*,' mental dispositions towards the new arrivals were more complex and thereby more open."

for war: "Roussillac knelt next to me during church service. The emigrant next to the *réfugié*! The Catholic next to the Protestant! Surely, this was already a kind of church union [Kirchenvereinigung]?" (R III, 328–29). Bowing to God and devoting themselves to serving the country that has been or has become their home, Robert and Roussillac unite in faith and for Franco-German solidarity. A decade after the liberation wars during which the novel is set, Fouqué's historical fiction reminds readers of both the forms of Franco-German cooperation in the war against Bonaparte rule and the (hi)stories of exile that bring both pre- and post-revolutionary migration within German territories into focus.

(4) Connected to the memory of *réfugiés* and *émigrés*, Fouqué's novel reflects on the social and cultural relevance of the *refuge* in general and the Huguenot diaspora in Berlin in particular.[54] Calling on readers to sustain and serve the memory of *réfugié* practices, the novel memorises the values of Huguenot culture at a time during which it had gradually been disappearing. In this respect, the novel yet again participates in Huguenot myth-making, in which "facts amalgamated with memories and euphemisms."[55] Already at the beginning of the novel, the decline of a distinct Huguenot identity is reflected in Gautier's pioneering turn from preaching in the French "*réfugié* colony" to accepting a post as "German preacher" (R I, 2). In fact, Gautier's reference to Huguenot culture anticipates what happens to his own Huguenot family line at the end of the novel: It becomes extinct.

> Oh, who knows whether we poor *réfugiés* will help ourselves through the world any longer! See, most of our knightly families are dying out. Those who still live in the colony, may well flourish brightly and cheerfully, nurtured by your hospitality, you brave German compatriots, but they either adopt your ways to the point of forgetting their own origin or – take heed! – they die out without a trace at last. (R I, 52–53)

Fouqué tries to counter the process of "forgetting" *réfugié* history by narrating the Gautiers' lives and their own practices of story-telling. The novel dwells on how the Gautiers keep the memory of their ancestors alive[56] and renders perceptible the process of Robert's re-encounter with and (re-)identification as *réfugié*: While studying in Berlin, Robert happens to walk into a church by accident and finds himself in a group of *réfugié* worshippers celebrating mass in French. As the

54 Cf. Manuela Böhm, "Hugenottische Netzwerke in der Berliner Wissenschaft, Verwaltung und Kunst um 1800," in *Netzwerke des Wissens: Das intellektuelle Berlin um 1800*, ed. Anne Baillot (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2011), 283–309.

55 Lachenicht, "Renaissance in der Diaspora," 497.

56 Cf. the pastor's vivid narration of his forefathers fleeing from France as well as his story about Paul Gerhardt as a relative in mind and exile ("we have something very much Gerhardtian about us." R I, 302).

"*ancient*, named according to French fashion," (R II, 378) tells Robert: "We are *réfugiés* – what is usually called the colony here" (R II, 377). It is in this context and when attending the French service that Robert is shown to ponder the means of Huguenot assimilation and to find ways of reconnecting himself to his *réfugié* genealogy. Stepping into the church, listening to the French sermon, singing the French hymns, he is moved emotionally but also imaginatively towards his exiled ancestors until he thinks he sees "his pious emigrated forefather" (R II, 380) handing the hymnbook over to him:

> It almost seemed to him as if he had been transported to the earnest, wistful time when his pious fathers first found protection and hospitality in these lands. At that time, only a few listeners could take part in the so-called French service in the hospitable, spacious churches. Many, who certainly longed fervently to come here to the fraternal congregation, were still swimming in the wild seas, or groaned sorrowfully at the French borders, which did not want to open up for them to escape. And now it was so comfortable to be here, but almost no one came to the old-fashioned assembly anymore. "All honour to the beautiful German language! And all honour to the beautiful worship in it!" Robert thought to himself. "But it is and remains wrong not to cherish such sweet and serious memories more faithfully than I have done to this day!" (R II, 378–380)

Via Robert's imaginative visualisation of a Huguenot past connected to forced migration – a past that has direct links to both his own experiences with forced migration and his desire to belong – the novel calls for an active engagement with and remembering of *réfugié* culture beyond cultural and linguistic divides, in uncertain times yet to come. The juridical privilege of the Berlin colony was dispelled after Napoleon's troops had taken over the city in 1806 and the *réfugiés* were unwilling to pledge allegiance to France (instead, they emphasised that they had become "good Prussian citizens").[57] Publishing his novel in 1824, Fouqué taps into the history of the Huguenot *refuge* and launches a didactic appeal for a *réfugié* future that both commemorates the hardships of Huguenot life in exile and creates new visions of Huguenot-Prussian identity in German lands.

57 Wilke, "Zur Geschichte der französischen Kolonie," 85. Nonetheless, religious and administrative freedom were still granted to the Huguenot diaspora by the new authorities. As Lachenicht ("Renaissance in der Diaspora," 180–181) emphasises, the French colony was sustained until 1809, yet its institutions had become "empty nutshells," since *réfugiés* had increasingly left these separate communities in social, linguistic, economic and religious terms.

Coda: Knowing Migration in the Romantic Novel

Recent scholarship in the history of migration has stressed the importance of "adopting the perspective of the refugees themselves."[58] Not only in terms of its capacity to integrate and make acknowledgeable multiple perspectives, characters and stories, narrative fiction can serve as a valuable means to account for refugee viewpoints.[59] Fouqué's *The Réfugié* illustrates the contribution of literature for gaining insights into the production, distribution and transformation of knowledge about migration in the Romantic period. Fouqué's novel intertwines the history of *réfugié* migration dating back to the late seventeenth century with his own migratory background as well as the recent history of displacement and exile faced by both French and German citizens in the aftermath of the French Revolution and during the Coalition Wars. Moreover, the novel also makes evident the way in which literature responded to the decline of *réfugié* communities and culture, and thus can be acknowledged as a medium preparing and anticipating the "Huguenot renaissance,"[60] beginning around 1870. *The Réfugié*, a novel available in many public libraries which were, of course, not only frequented by a Huguenot readership,[61] served as a reminder to and idolised Huguenot allegiance to the Prussian state in the fight against the French invasion twenty years after this invasion had taken place. Furthermore, the novel not only supports recent findings about the problematic processes of Huguenot assimilation into German societies but also mediates individual suffering and national belonging as one of the significant reasons

58 Jansen, "Flucht und Exil," 518.

59 German historiographic accounts of the age of emigrations, I find, still make little use of fiction and literary analysis. Paradigmatically, Oltmer (*Migration*, 24) refers to literary fiction only implicitly as "emigration literature" [Auswanderungsliteratur] read as one of the decisive media distributing information and advice on migration for those willing/needing to migrate in the nineteenth century. Pestel (*Weimar als Exil*, 162) only mentions Goethe's refugee drama *Hermann und Dorothea* in passing when he looks at the books taken from the lending libraries in Weimar by French *émigrés*.

60 Fuhrich-Gruber, "Minoritäten in Preußen," 1218.

61 Cf., for example, Joseph Lindauer, *Bücherverzeichniss der Joseph Lindauer'schen Leihbibliothek* (Munich, 1825), 226; Rudolph Deuerlich, *Universal-Katalog der Leihbibliothek: Wissenschaftlich und alphabetisch geordnet* (Göttingen: Weenderstraße Nr. 59, 1830), 31. The novel was not only included in public libraries but also made subject of different reviews in renowned literary journals. Mixed critical responses to *The Réfugié* can be gathered, for instance, from the anonymous review which lauds the "pleasing spirit of authentic religiosity" [wohlthuende[] Geiste echter Religiösität] of the third volume but thinks the novel overall aesthetically "mannered" [manierirt] and too much occupied with the aristocracy. Cf. "*Der Refugié. Oder Heimath und Fremde* [. . .]," *Leipziger Literatur-Zeitung* (3 Aug. 1825). Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel [year of publication missing]. 1481–1485.

for Huguenot myth-making. It thus takes part in but also critically compliments the euphemisms and distortions of Huguenot historiography. Finally, the novel reflects on the structures and functions of story-telling regarding life in exile. Fiction and imaginative approaches to migration provide the means of fostering alliances between different times and stories of expulsion and exile; in this respect, Fouqué's novel auto-reflexively dwells on its own terms of conception, its didactics and desired effects and serves as a reminder for both literary and historical studies of how narratives and rhetoric pertain to knowledge about migration at the turn of the eighteenth century.

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Kai Wiegandt

Chapter 8
Western Migrants in Hong Kong: Neo-Imperial Gothic and the Literary Imagination of Reverse Domination

Introduction

When during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (roughly 1880–1914) the British Empire was still growing towards its largest territorial extent, an interesting trend could be observed in English fiction: narratives emerged in which occult forces help the colonised turn the tables on the British coloniser. This reversal of domination is sometimes only half-realised, as in narratives telling of occult phenomena following characters from imperial settings home to Britain. In Arthur Conan Doyle's story "The Brown Hand" (1899), for example, an Anglo-Indian doctor who has returned to Britain is haunted by the ghost of an Afghan whose hand he had amputated. In "The Ring of Toth" (1890) and "Lot No. 249" (1892), Egyptian mummies come to life at the Louvre and in the rooms of an Oxford student.[1] Inexplicable curses, demonic possession and ghostly visitations threatening to undermine British control of the colonies are the ingredients of a great number of tales. At the other end of the spectrum are narratives that imagine reverse domination as full-blown reverse colonization, i.e. as invasion of Britain by the colonised who now rule and exploit the Britons. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* belongs to these narratives. The protagonist, described as the last of a conquering race, is transferred to London and threatens to create a new and ever-growing circle of semi-demons enslaving Britain's native population.[2] Eitan Bar-Yosef has analysed reverse colonization in H. Rider Haggard's novel *She* (1887) in which the African Queen Ayesha plans to pillage London and depose Queen Victoria, and in E. Nesbit's *The Story of the Amulet* (1906) in which the Queen of Babylon invades London, feeds the hungry masses and butchers the members of the stock exchange.[3] Reverse colonization also occurs in Rudyard Kipling's early fiction ("The Mark of the Beast," "At the End

1 Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830–1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 230–231.

2 Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 233–234.

3 Eitan Bar-Yosef, "E. Nesbit and the Fantasy of Reverse Colonization: How Many Miles to Modern Babylon?" *ELT* 46.1 (2003): 5–6.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-008

of the Passage," *The Light that Failed*), in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories (*The Sign of Four*, "The Crooked Man"), in H. G. Wells' science fiction tales (*The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*) and in many of the adventure novels of G. A. Hope, Henry S. Merriman and John Buchan, as Stephen D. Arata has shown.[4]

Patrick Brantlinger has counted these narratives of reverse domination[5] amongst what he calls 'imperial gothic'. According to Brantlinger, the "three principal themes of imperial Gothic are individual regression or going native; an invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism; and the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world."[6] Late Victorians' fascination with the occult had roots in the prevailing and restrictive world view of scientific materialism and positivism which led them to search for new sources of faith in telepathy, séances and psychic research.[7] The search also led to the far reaches of the Empire, where strange gods and "unspeakable rites" still had their millions of devotees. Publication of Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 marks the beginning of this trend, and the stunning success of Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879) suggests the strength of the desire for alternatives to both religious orthodoxy and scientific skepticism. For the same reason, A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) was widely popular, as was his earlier *The Occult World* (1881).[8] While both imperialism and occultism functioned as *ersatz* religions in times of increasingly dominant scientific explanations of the world and the declining authority of Christianity, Brantlinger argues that their fusion in imperial gothic precisely at the climax of the British Empire represents something different from a search for new faiths: it expresses anxiety over a possible decline of the Empire and over how easily civilization can turn into barbarism, and domination into powerlessness[9] even while some of the narratives in question end with a restoration of order. Stephen Arata has argued that while the "fear is that what has been represented as the 'civilized' world is on the point of being colonized by 'primitive'

4 Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (1990): 623.

5 The phrases "reverse domination" and "reverse colonization" have the unfortunate echo of "reverse discrimination" and "reverse racism" – phrases that are used by people who are actually participating in racist violence, whether physical or symbolic, to legitimate claims to being targeted. I want to state that I use the phrases "reverse domination" and "reverse colonization" because they describe the power dynamics imagined in the texts more precisely than others. I do not support claims of "reverse discrimination" and "reverse racism" made by participants in racist violence.

6 Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 230.

7 Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 228.

8 Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 228.

9 Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 227–229.

forces," late Victorian and Edwardian reverse colonization narratives are "also responses to cultural guilt. In the marauding, invasive Other, British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back in monstrous forms."[10] According to Eitan Bar-Yosef, these narratives suggest that "racial and moral decline made the nation vulnerable to attack by forces whose brutality was merely a monstrous reworking of Britain's own imperial practices."[11]

If we make a leap of a hundred years to the period from the late 1980s to the present – the period in which reverse domination narratives reappear – historical phenomena of imperialism have changed dramatically in the wake of the shifting geopolitical situation. The British Empire imploded after World War II. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the decolonizing movements had led to the liberation of almost all former colonies and a capitalist globality. Political scientists and political philosophers as different as Francis Fukuyama on the one hand and Toni Negri and Michael Hardt on the other have described the end of the Cold War as a globalization of capitalism.[12] Yet imperialism survived in the guise of "informal imperialism"[13] (Robert C. Young) that does not rely on the physical and administrative means of subjugation that characterised the colonialism of much of the twentieth century.[14] Cultural imperialism, often ascribed to the United States, is at play here, but as its synonym 'Coca-colonization' suggests, economic dominance has been the sole force behind informal imperialism. A significant change that the globalization of capitalism has brought in the late twentieth century is the rise of new centres of economic dominance outside Euro-America: Asia's financial and manufacturing capitals and – due to their near-complete control of oil prices – the Gulf States. The China that Marx and Engels described in their time was still the *object* of informal imperialism.[15] In recent decades, it has made full use of the political force of its competitive commodity prices.

Until now, critics concerned with literature written by and about Western migrants have focused on texts that repeat the perspective of colonial narratives in the tradition of Flaubert, Conrad and Kipling. Bruce Robbins, for instance, has

10 Arata, "The Occasional Tourist," 623.

11 Bar-Yosef, "E. Nesbit and the Fantasy of Reverse Colonization," 5.

12 See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992); Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (2000).

13 Robert J. C. Young, *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (Oxford and Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 118.

14 Young, *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*, 117–134.

15 "The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It [. . .] creates a world after its own image." Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (New York: International Publishers Inc., 1948), 13.

shown how such narratives import the hegemonic perspective to Africa and Asia, render the Western self superior to the exotic other while the east serves as a scene of spiritual or erotic self-exploration.[16] Critics such as Caren Irr have focused on recent 'world novels' such as Aleksandar Hemon's *Nowhere Man* that feature multi-stranded narration, broad geographical reach, cosmopolitan ethics, multilingual sensitivity, a renewed commitment to realism and mostly American protagonists engaged in picaresque travels.[17] James Annesley, Stephan Besser and Yra van Dijk have read novels about Western migrants as 'fictions of globalisation' that imagine global consumer capitalism and rework contemporary discourses and debates around globalization by having their characters travelling to the Middle East experience alienation and failure.[18]

What is missing, I argue, is an account of the revival of the reverse domination narrative among recent British and American fiction about Western migrants. Examples include Paul Theroux's *Kowloon Tong*, Lawrence Osborne's *Ballad of a Small Player*, Hilary Mantel's *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* and Dave Eggers' *A Hologram for the King*. Whereas nineteenth and early twentieth century reverse domination narratives featured an invasion from the periphery to the imperial centre, recent instances of the genre feature the migration of professionals from the Global North to the new economic centres in the Global South and the subservient status of these professionals in former colonies or spheres of influence. Gothic elements underpin this reversal of power. While the narratives from a hundred years ago perform an uncanny mimicry of colonial tropes of invasion and appropriation by the coloniser, the mimicry performed by recent reverse domination narratives models itself on the marginalised figure of the migrant from the Global South in a hegemonic Northern culture, such as Caribbean and Pakistani migrants in Britain. The Western migrants in the Middle and Far East are shown in roles formerly reserved for the migrant from the Global South even while they fill qualified positions in the Asian or the Gulf States' labour market – and even as the novels betray a sense of presenting characters who are similar to, but not quite the same as colonised nineteenth century Indians or twentieth century Congolese. The European, US-American and Canadian

16 Bruce Robbins, "The Worlding of the American Novel," in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1096–1106.

17 Caren Irr, "Toward the World Novel: Genre Shifts in Twenty-First Century Expatriate Fiction," *American Literary History* 23.3 (2011): 674–678.

18 James Annesley, *Fictions of Globalization* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 104–127; Stephan Besser and Yra van Dijk, "Kafka on the Gulf: Male Identity, Space, and Globalization in Dave Egger's *A Hologram for the King* and Arnon Grunberg's *The Man without Illness*," *Comparative Literature* 69.1 (2017): 111–127.

migrants to the South remain citizens of those nations that are still global centres of informal imperialism. The narratives about their ordeals in the South are, ultimately, *neo-imperial* gothic: an update of the narratives of reverse domination from the late Victorian and Edwardian periods which drew on gothic elements. Typically, the Western migrants of these recent narratives come to the Global South intending to stay for a limited time. They realise late that they have in fact migrated for good and have somehow become uncannily similar to migrants who have made their way from the South to Europe and North America.

The literary models for theses narratives are not typical colonial genres such as tales of adventure and quest, the colonial pastoral, or colonial historical fiction[19] which underpin late Victorian reverse domination narratives. Neo-imperial gothic narratives do not even exhibit any awareness of their Victorian forerunners. What has given the genre of the gothic narrative of reverse domination a new lease on life is its adoption of the figure of the migrant from more recent *post*colonial fiction concerned with the experiences of first-generation migrants, most often of alienation and subalternity, and tinged with a strong sense of the differing national cultures of home and abroad. Examples of this kind of postcolonial migration narrative are especially the novels of authors such as V. S. Naipaul, Jean Rhys, Caryl Phillips, Jamaica Kincaid, Ben Okri, Sam Selvon, Kamau Brathwaite, George Lamming and others: authors belonging to the first generation of "postcolonial" writers not because they necessarily wrote all their works *after* liberation, but because they wrote with an attitude of resistance to colonization.[20] The novel has been these authors' preferred literary form – arguably because it takes a central place in the canon of the British Empire which postcolonial writers have sought revise by "writing back to it," as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have argued.[21] Yet arguably also because the novel form is particularly good at conveying experience and subjectivity over time, as David Lodge has argued.[22] Experiences of migration and the impact of these experiences on migrants' subjectivities is what the above-named authors describe.

Recent reverse domination narratives mimic selected tropes of these postcolonial migration novels such as migrants' "experiences of cultural exclusion and

19 Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 15, 113–116.

20 Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 176.

21 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989), 77.

22 "The novel is arguably man's most successful effort to describe the experience of individual human beings moving through space and time." David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 10.

division" and their "resist[ance to] colonialist perspectives."[23] They ignore many other tropes of postcolonial migration novels, however, especially the consciousness that migration from the former colonies to the colonial centre is causally related to the inverse European colonialist expansion that preceded it. The recent narratives of reverse domination cannot themselves be called postcolonial. By the standards of the genre theorists David Fishelov and Alastair Fowler, they can however count as instances of the reverse domination narrative *and* of the migration narrative because they exhibit essential features of both. All instances of a genre exhibit *some* thematic (and sometimes also formal) qualities essential to the genre such as plot structures, settings, stock characters and character constellations, atmospheres, expectable actions and outcomes, and linguistic particularities. Single instances of the genre hardly ever exhibit all of these qualities at the same time. Fishelov and Fowler submit that genres are defined by a small number of necessary criteria shared by all instances of the genre, and a larger number of typical, though optional criteria, so that some instances are more prototypical of a genre than others.[24]

Contemporary reverse colonization narratives' mimicry of postcolonial fiction concerned with the experiences of first-generation migrants has an uncanny effect on Western readers because it suggests that subaltern migrancy associated with strangers is now becoming an experience familiar to Westerners; and, on the literary level, because postcolonial fiction concerned with the experiences of first-generation migrants is now appropriated by and suggested to be appropriate to the West. The focus tends to be on local value systems being imposed on and clashing with diasporic Western systems of value. The language in which twenty and twenty-first century authors of reverse domination narrative write is often a thematic concern in the narratives, where the supposed European *lingua franca* occupies minority status as opposed to Arabic, Mandarin or Cantonese. As in postcolonial writing, language is an embattled ground of asymmetric power relations.

The uncanny is an important gothic element in recent reverse domination narratives. It expresses fears of decline and marginalization as did the imaginings of reverse domination around the end of the nineteenth century.[25] This is the

23 Boehmer, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, 3.

24 David Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 60–72; Alistair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 41–43.

25 The gothic in recent narratives of reverse domination has little in common with what critics have called "postcolonial gothic" as a subversion of Enlightenment rationality associated with the coloniser (for ex. Andrew Smith and William Hughes, "Introduction: The Enlightenment Gothic and Postcolonialism," in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre* (Basingstoke:

perspective I take in the following readings. The recent gothic narratives of reverse domination do not mirror actual socio-economic trends. While responding to real socio-economic trends, they are principally fantasies. These fantasies and their gothic elements such as the uncanny testify to Western anxiety of losing economic, political and cultural influence to cultures that, formerly seen as marginal, are now perceived as threats to global dominance.

Paul Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*

Particularly since the end of the Cold War in 1989, a large number of multinational companies with headquarters in Asia have appeared on the global economic scene, some of them 'born global.' With the rise of companies such as Samsung in South Korea, Mobile in China, and Reliance Industries Ltd. in India the multinational label has ceased to be monopolised by the West. By 2007, Asian "emerging market" countries had 70 corporations in *Fortune*'s ranking of the world's largest corporations. A decade earlier it had only been 20. The rapid growth of some Asian economies, together with the stalling and recession of Western economies, has meant that increasing numbers of Western migrants have arrived in countries such as Korea, Taiwan and especially China, which now hosts the second largest number of Western expatriates after the USA.[26] At the same time, large numbers of Western migrants have moved to Asia on their own initiative, finding employment as teachers of English as a foreign language, because the Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, Thai and Cambodian middle class (to name only some rising Asian economies) strive for proficiency in English in order to attain qualified employment in globally active Asian corporations. Lawrence Osborne, a nomadic novelist who has been attentive to this trend, has a British emigré to Asia, aged around thirty, ruminate in his novel *Hunters in the Dark* (2015):

> English teachers were two a dozen in [Phnom Penh] and most cities like it. They formed a kind of sub-society all over the Far East, a loose confederation of dubious individuals with their own social niche and their severe reputation for being mangy and broke [. . .]. Several

Palgrave, 2003), 2). Critics have read the occurrence of the supernatural, monstrous and nonhuman characters in works by Jean Rhys, Bessie Head, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Toni Morrison, Tash Aw, Erna Brodber, Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy along these lines. Cf. Philip Holden, "The 'Postcolonial Gothic:' Absent Histories, Present Contexts," *Textual Practice* 23.3 (2009): 354.

26 See Paula Caligiuri and Jaime Bonache, "Evolving and Enduring Challenges in Global Mobility," *Journal of World Business* 51 (2016): 128–131.

> of his friends at college had gone on to pursue that way of live in places where the koel birds sing and nothing more was ever heard of them. The tropical English teacher in his cargo shorts and flip-flops and his bad haircuts, saving his pennies by eating local every night [. . .].[27]

Like other diasporas around the world, the new Western migrants are a diasporic minority in strong national cultures that regard them as a mobile workforce. The new Western migrants differ from earlier ones in number but also, more significantly, in not being received as representatives of an aspired-to Western modernity, and in being expected to quickly adapt to local mentalities. U.S.-American migrants to China reported in 2008 that their expectations of the country were not at all met by what they found when taking up work in a Chinese firm. The rampant consumerism, rising middle classes and rush to modernise they found in China did not make China more "Western" to them. Chinese business practices and cultural norms struck them as very different from those of Western cultures. Understanding the behaviour and actions of their Chinese employers and fellow workers was challenging not only because of language barriers but because of foreign cultural norms which they were expected to adapt to.[28]

In the following I will dicuss an example of reverse domination fiction that holds a prominent place in the genre because it addresses a key event in East Asia's rise to global power and arguably a turning point in world history: Britain's handover of its colony Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997. The novel is Paul Theroux' *Kowloon Tong*, published in the year of the handover and set in the months before it. The handover is both symbolic of the shift of power between the former European coloniser and China, and coincides with China's spectacularly rising economic prowess. In this novel, I will argue, the shift from the Westerner's position from hegemon to service provider, and from following the models of colonial to postcolonial fiction, is not an accomplished fact but occurs as the plot develops. *Kowloon Tong* concerns a factory called Imperial Stitching in the Hong Kong neighbourhood of Kowloon Tong, owned by the British Neville "Bunt" Mullard. Bunt receives an offer to acquire it from the sinister Mr. Hung, who turns out to be an officer of the People's Liberation Army. The English factory owner tries to resist but Mr. Hung, using threats and blackmail, eventually pushes Bunt out of Hong Kong. An allegorical fantasy of the political events to come, the tale imagines a dramatic end to colonial co-existence in the form of a

27 Lawrence Osborne, *Hunters in the Dark* (London: Penguin, 2015), 93.

28 Scott Hipsher, *Expatriates in Asia: Breaking Free from the Colonial Paradigm* (Amsterdam: Woodhead/Elsevier, 2008), 120.

hostile takeover.[29] As will become clear, the novel's lurid plot and flat characters exemplify typical features of recent reverse domination narratives with little ambivalence.

The novel's recapturing of the life of Bunt's mother Betty, and of the fate of Imperial Stitching, tells a story of economic and moral decline. Living in what Betty Mullard calls "Albion Cottage," with the Queen's portrait on the wall and the house full of British-made appliances no longer manufactured,[30] she seems herself an anachronism like Imperial Stitching. The factory was founded in 1950 by Bunt's father with the help of a Chinese business partner who had fled from the mainland. In its heyday, the factory's specialization in uniforms guaranteed that the colonial administration would order in large quantities.[31] The Mullards have led a colonial life of ease since, with Chinese servants and the conviction that "nothing would change for either of them, ever. Their lives were fixed for good as master and servant."[32] They are unable to understand Cantonese because they never needed it.[33] A first irritation, prophetic of greater change, occurred in 1967 when Imperial Stitching's name was torn off the factory roof: during the Cultural Revolution, pro-communist protesters in Hong Kong rebelled against the city government and British colonial rule. During the following decades, the factory shrank because Chinese mainland producers offered their textiles at better prices. Margaret Thatcher's announcement in 1984 that Hong Kong would be handed over in 1997 announced the next step downward.

The private life of Bunt Mullard mirrors the decline of Imperial Stitching. Compensating the factory's loss of significance and being commandeered by his mother, he exploits factory hands who cannot afford to push him away. Mei-Ping, one of Bunt's workers, is coerced into being his lover.[34] Bunt spends his breaks with Kowloon's prostitutes. Taught by his father to ask for a *gweilo* policeman, i.e., a British one, when calling the police,[35] Bunt does not hesitate to make use of his at first privileged colonial status at the cost of others.

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29 See Klaus Stierstorfer, "1997: The Decolonization of Hong Kong in Contemporary Fiction in English," in *Anglophones Cultures in Southeast Asia: Appropriations, Continuities, Contexts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 175–180, and Douglas Kerr, "A Passage to Kowloon Tong: Paul Theroux and Hong Kong 1997," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 34.2 (1999): 75–81.

30 Paul Theroux, *Kowloon Tong* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1–6.

31 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 20.

32 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 35.

33 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 37–38.

34 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 28.

35 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 22.

The novel suggests that though born in Hong Kong speaking his first words in Cantonese picked up from his nannies,[36] Bunt feels a migrant, neither fully British nor fully a citizen of Hong Kong. He self-pityingly uses this condition to justify his behaviour to himself. In rare moments, he becomes aware of his hunger for violent domination: "Bunt often felt like seizing their skinny shoulders and dragging them down, and he hated himself for his demented rapist's fantasies."[37] These fantasies are in character with Bunt's repeatedly mentioned fascination with crime reports in the newspapers mixing sex and crime.[38] Notably, his fantasies of rape follow a discussion between him and his mother on colonialism. She had said about what she calls the "Chinese takeaway:" "You think they're going to be teaching the British view of colonialism? It will be the official Chinese version of world history. Look at immigration. Who will qualify? Only the people the Chinese want."[39]

The juxtaposition of Bunt's violent fantasies with a discussion of who owns the interpretation of British colonialism suggests that Bunt's disturbing thoughts belong not merely to his individual psychology but are part of the colonizing mindset – an association of colonialism with psychopathology that has been a trope of postcolonial criticism since Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*. Bunt typifies the last, degenerate colonial and exhibits the essential 'sickness' of colonialism without being portrayed as evil, however. It is Mr. Hung, taking over the role of dominator, who is tirelessly associated with greed, sadism and murderousness. Acting as epitome of evil, he exceeds the bounds of psychology and gives the reverse colonization allegorically enacted by him a gothic quality.

I agree with Mary Louise Pratt that particularly Theroux the travel writer has made a career out of saying how horrible the Third World is,[40] but I also agree with Douglas Kerr's claim that "the best defence of the awfulness of Hung is the awfulness of Bunt."[41] In *Kowloon Tong*, the turning of the tables between coloniser and colonised means that no party *morally* maintains the upper hand. Both are compromised by colonial desire. The fact that large parts of the novel are focalised through Bunt means that the reader is served explicit condemnations of the Chinese Hung but must infer Bunt's awfulness. Yet Bunt's thoughts themselves demonstrate, rather than cover, the pathologies of his mind corrupted by the same colonizing impulse that drives Hung.

36 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 22.
37 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 81.
38 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 145.
39 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 78.
40 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge), 219–220.
41 Kerr, "A Passage to Kowloon Tong," 80.

Beside the supernatural and the sublime, the uncanny is one of the key motifs in gothic fiction.[42] Sigmund Freud defined it as that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.[43] Simultaneously frighteningly unfamiliar and strangely familiar, the uncanny contributes to gothic fiction's evocation of terror by undermining the characters' sense of being at home in the world, but also literally in their domicile. Freud characterises the uncanny as unhomeliness. Homi Bhabha argues that Freud's notion of unhomeliness "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world,"[44] and that it is "a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition."[45] It is precisely a feeling of being without home as a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition that the Mullards' Chinese opponents instil in them. Before Hung enters the scene, the Mullards' servant Wang is described as a chilling, threatening presence in their home, looking "even more snake-like when he smiled [. . .]. His laughter was [. . .] even more sinister."[46] When Bunt's Chinese business partner, Mr. Chuck, is buried, a train of mask-wearing, wailing figures appears. They are the deceased's relatives: "They were Chinese, but like monks in white cowls – druidical and threatening, pagans ambushing Mr. Chuck's Christian burial."[47] Bunt fears that they will lay claim to a share in the factory.

Mr. Hung lures the Mullards into selling the house in which Imperial Stitching is located, the company that anchors them in Hong Kong. Fred Botting reminds us that through the ages, the motif of the house inherited the function of the castle in gothic fiction:

> as both building and family line it became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present [. . .] By nefarious means Gothic villains usurp rightful heirs, rob reputable families of property and reputation [. . .]. Illegitimate power and violence is not only put on display but threatens to consume the world of civilised and domestic values.[48]

Kowloon Tong follows this prototypically gothic plot. When a generous offer of money does not suffice, Hung resorts to blackmail; he knows of Bunt's tax fraud, of his visits in brothels and his exploitative relation with Mei-Ping.[49] Forced to sell Imperial Stitching, Bunt realises that Hung's motives are not merely economic: "Hung

42 Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

43 Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche" in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999), 229–256.

44 Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 141–153, 141.

45 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 13.

46 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 5.

47 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 12–13.

48 Botting, *Gothic*, 2–3.

49 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 86.

had attached himself to Bunt, who resented him. It was as though, having proven Bunt to be weak, Hung now wanted to insinuate himself further, to exploit him more, to exhibit ownership, to toy with him, to savour the foreign devil's humiliation."[50] Having deprived Bunt of his claim to belong by 'usurping' his home, Hung sadistically desires to turn the Englishman into a dependent subject. Bunt is forced to interpret each of his steps in relation to his new master. Hung uncannily exhibits the same colonizing turn of mind and its fantasies of suffering as Bunt did before him. The pathological dimension of these desires is brought out when Hung invites Bunt, Mei-Ping and her fellow worker, Ah Fu, for drinks in a bar. Hung, whose tongue turns blue from too much alcohol, forces a piece of jade into Ah Fu's mouth as if to choke her, finally letting her spit it out. A day later, Bunt receives news that Ah Fu has disappeared. He suspects that she might have fallen victim to a crime committed by Hung who, after eating chicken feet, had said to Ah Fu that he wants to eat *her* foot.[51] The novel makes clear that this lurid display of dominance, showing Bunt how powerless he is against Hung's violation of the women working at his factory, is enabled by economic factors. Selling the factory means also selling the worker Mei-Ping to Hung: if Bunt reported Hung to the police, it would be the end of the deal, and he would lose the factory and Mei-Ping either way.[52]

The term "mimicry" crops up in the novel precisely when Hung's display of dominance resembles Bunt's most closely: both exploit women. When Hung presents Bunt with a check to keep him silent about Ah Fu's disappearance, Bunt muses: "A Chinese check, like a Chinese everything else, was so much an imitation it was probably unusable, just an exercise in mimicry."[53] The choice of vocabulary betrays a strategy that characterises the Chinese Mr. Hung as much as *Kowloon Tong*'s poetic of reverse domination. Colonial mimicry, Homi Bhabha argues, occurs when colonised subjects imitate and take on the habitus of the colonisers. It derives from the "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite."[54] The colonised mimics are "the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorised versions of otherness."[55] But by repeating the coloniser with a difference, the colonised are able to resist colonial authority while appearing to submit to it. When the colonised repeat the coloniser with a difference, they performatively question the notions of "essential" or "authentic" identity and allow for a double optic: while colonial

50 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 100.
51 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 115, 133–135, 159.
52 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 216.
53 Theroux, *Kowloon Tong*, 155.
54 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
55 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 126.

mimicry seems derivative of the coloniser's identity, the so-called original can also appear derivative of its imitation. As colonial mimicry reveals that there is no natural identity, it "reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the coloniser's presence; a gaze of otherness."[56] Bhabha links this partiality to metonymy: mimicry is not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically.[57] The effect is always uncanny: a return of the familiar in unfamiliar form. *Kowloon Tong*'s reverse domination narrative adds this uncanniness to its already gothic scenario of the cannibalised Ah Fu. The check presented to Bunt may seem fake to him but in fact metonymically repeats British colonial rule with a difference: instead of applying violence, money and threats are enough to subdue Bunt and enlist Mei-Ping as colonised subject in the service of the new Chinese proprietors.

The novel's ending underlines this mimicry. As soon as Bunt has finalised the deal with Hung, he is ushered out of a restaurant by Chinese thugs, to be brought to the airport where he is to board a plane never to return to Hong Kong. A memory comes to Bunt of how he used to sack employees: "'See him out', Bunt would say, and the man would be propelled like a bundle down the stairs and into the street. That was how Bunt felt now, like a sacked employee."[58] The communist People's Republic taking over Hong Kong gets rid of surplus labour just as the capitalist Bunt used to. The former British masters become employees who can be sacked and treated like a commodity ("like a bundle"). At no point is Bunt touched or his physical integrity violated. Typical of reverse domination narratives since the end of the bi-polar world order, imperialism is enforced by the workings of capitalism. Whereas until 1989 imperialism could still be considered a process of one ideological system dominating another, recent narratives of reverse domination imagine it as informal, economic imperialism.

As the familiar European colonialism returns with a difference in Chinese domination, mimicry as a desire to conform to the behaviour and norms of the coloniser turns into domination pure and simple. When Bunt desperately continues to play the part of coloniser, the novel suggests that Bunt mimics Mr. Hung, who is in fact in control. As the novel is focalised through Bunt – only a few parts through his mother – the description of events is tinged with Bunt's horror at a reversal of hierarchies that, to him, is incomprehensible, irrational, demonic. In the twentieth century, gothic fiction has continued to focus on the dark underside

56 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 126.
57 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 128.
58 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 237.

of Enlightenment beliefs in progress, modernization, and free trade through its dramatizations of "supernatural and natural forces, [. . .] religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption."[59] Walter Mignolo's *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* and Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason* have demonstrated how Enlightenment beliefs served Europeans in their justification of colonialism.[60] To the Mullards, Mr. Hung's reverse domination makes him appear like a devil, a supernatural force turning them into strangers in their own homes and disrupting the secular Enlightenment narrative of progress. They can imagine a narrative of progress featuring a *Chinese* protagonist only as a horror story.

Conclusion

Kowloon Tong illustrates the subversive mimicry of well-known tales of new homes found and of progress through reason and free trade particularly clearly by way of its schematic plot and characters. The fact that the novel is only one – albeit prominent – example of recent reverse domination narratives becomes clear when we briefly look at Lawrence Osborne's novel *The Ballad of a Small Player* (2014). While gothic narratives of reverse domination comprise novels about other regions such as the Gulf States, Osborne's novel is set in Hong Kong and Macau and exhibits particularly many parallels with Theroux's. The motto from Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* prepares the gothic atmosphere: "Faustus: How comes then that thou art out of hell? / Mephistopheles: Why this is hell, nor am I out of it."[61] The novel follows an English lawyer, son of a vacuum cleaner salesman from Croydon to Macau and Hong Kong after he fleeced an early widow. The man assumes the identity of Lord Doyle, determined to gamble away his days in casinos. These casinos are fantasy versions of the European culture he left, with names such as "Greek Mythology" and "The Mona Lisa:" a mimicry that, at face value, seems to testify to China's aspiration to be like Europe, but is in fact a commodification of European culture for a Chinese version of capitalism. Largely alone amongst gamblers from mainland China, Doyle mimics the master of colonial times ("Lord Doyle" etc.) but finds himself ridiculed in the casinos: "I was the only *gwai lo* there that night, and the regulars who knew me

59 Botting, *Gothic*, 1.

60 See also Young, *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*, 97.

61 Lawrence Osborne, *The Ballad of a Small Player* (London and New York: Hogarth, 2014), n. pag.

glanced at me with their usual contempt. No matter. I had their measure, the little scum. If I lost again I'd do it with an exceptional indifference that would show them the pecking order of life."[62] The novel combines Doyle's quest with a ghost story when Doyle meets the haunted call-girl Dao-Ming, whose ghost follows him and guarantees that he wins every bet. While Doyle restores his position of 'master' at the gambling table, collecting the chips of the Chinese players, maintaining this position is as hopeless as is Bunt's in *Kowloon Tong*. Doyle turns into a puppet manipulated by a Chinese call-girl: a mimic controlled by those he desires to command.

Ballad of a Small Player was published in 2014 when Hong Kong's "umbrella movement" demanded the right for Hongkongers to choose their own leaders. Since then, and especially after the violent 2019/2020 protests, the People's Republic of China has cracked down on those who want to maintain Hong Kong's relative independence. China's control over the city is now stronger than ever, and Hong Kong's transformation into an ordinary Chinese economic centre like Shanghai has put Western economic migrants in the city under pressure. According to a survey conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong in May 2021, more than forty percent of them said they might leave the city due to concerns over China's imposition of national security laws.[63] But not all of them will leave. While it is not clear how China's tighter grip on the ex-colony will affect Western migrants, the fact that forty percent consider leaving suggests parallels with the time before Britain's handover of the colony to China in 1997 when Westerners' fears of marginalisation gave rise to fantasies of reverse domination.

As the economic hegemony of the West continues to wane and as China is increasingly seeking direct economic confrontation with the United States and Europe, contemporary readers should not be surprised to see the publication of more novels in the vein of *Kowloon Tong* and *Ballad of a Small Player*. The fact that China has since the handover of Hong Kong not exhibited colonial desires in as coarse and blatant ways as *Kowloon Tong*'s Hung makes the continued existence of the genre more rather than less likely, for it bears repetition that the gothic narratives of Western subjects fulfilling seemingly subservient roles in the East haven been imaginations of Western decline rather than documents of socio-economic and geopolitical change. Whereas the narrative imaginings of migration by postcolonial authors have drawn on their personal and/or their parents' experience and knowledge of migration, the accent of reverse domination novels by

62 Osborne, *The Ballad of a Small Player*, 36.

63 Bruce Einhorn, *More Than 40% of Hong Kong Expats in Survey Say They May Leave*, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-05-12/more-than-40-of-hong-kong-expats-may-leave-amcham-survey-says, Bloomberg, 2021 (25 November 2021).

Western authors such as Paul Theroux clearly falls on imagining rather than knowing migration. As I have tried to show in this chapter, the genre's imagination of migration is not fed by lived experience but by Western anxiety over losing economic strength to other regions. There is no reason to expect this anxiety to abate as long as the West has anything to lose.

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Katrin Dennerlein

Chapter 9
Knowledges and Morals: Narrating Consequences of Colonial Migration in Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978)

The first planned extinction of an ethnic group in the twentieth century was the German genocide of the Herero and later of the Nama people in the former colony of Deutsch-Südwestafrika (German Southwest Africa).[1] Between 1904 and 1908, the so-called German *Schutztruppen* murdered between 65.000 and 100.000 Ovaherero and at least 10.000 Nama. Nevertheless, only few attempts have been made to address these homicides in official political debates. On 24 February 1989, the political opposition in the German parliament took up the argument of "historical responsibility" and referred to German colonial mass crimes.[2] However, in 2013, the Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer still avoided calling the murder of the Herero and Nama a genocide and clearly rejected demands for reparations.[3] It was not until 28 May 2021 that the extermination of the Herero and Nama people was officially called a genocide for the first time by a German government.[4]

1 For historical background, cf. Horst Drechsler, *Aufstände in Südwestafrika: Der Kampf der Herero und Nama 1904 bis 1907 gegen die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft* (Berlin: Dietz, 1984).

2 129. Plenarsitzung des deutschen Bundestages, 24 February 1989, cf. Bundestag, "Stenographischer Bericht, 129. Sitzung. Bonn, Freitag, den 24. Februar 1989" https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/11/11129.pdf (7 February 2023).

3 Cf. the 2013 position paper by the Bundestag, "Die Positionen der im Deutschen Bundestag vertretenen Fraktionen zu den Beziehungen zu Namibia," *WD 2: Auswärtiges, Völkerrecht, wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, Verteidigung, Menschenrechte und humanitäre Hilfe*, Dokumentation WD 2 – 3000 – 103/13, 4, https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/406684/eaa8cbfd242fbc14cfd1643dbec042f1/WD-2-103-13-pdf-data.pdf (7 February 2023), and the following press release from 2013: Bundestag, "Deutschland hat keinen Völkermord an Herero an Nama begangen," http://webarchiv.bundestag.de/archive/2013/1212/presse/hib/2012_08/2012_367/05.html, Webarchiv Bundestag, 2013 (7 February 2023).

4 Yet, this admission was not accompanied by reparation payments, which descendants of the Herero and Nama continuously claim. Cf. Celia Parbey, "Wir fordern die Begleichung einer grausamen Schuld," Interview with Esther Muinjangue, https://www.zeit.de/zett/politik/2021-06/voelkermord-namibia-esther-utjiua-muinjangue-genozid-herero-abkommen, *ze.tt*, 2 June 2021 (7 February 2023). Long before these steps of official recognition, there have been repeated attempts beyond the level of government to bring to public knowledge the gruesome events that happened in the aftermath of the migration of German settlers, farmers, traders and plantation owners. Cf. Monika Albrecht, *Europa ist nicht die Welt: (Post)Kolonialismus in Literatur und Geschichte der westdeutschen Nachkriegszeit*

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For a long time, the public perception of the Herero and Nama uprising in Germany was mainly shaped by Gustav Frenssen's novel *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest* (1906).[5] The novel, published only two years after the uprising, pretends to be an account of soldiers' experiences and justifies as well as glorifies colonialism.[6] With his 1978 novel *Morenga* Uwe Timm wrote the first influential example of a German novel critical of the nation's colonialism.[7] Timm combines realistic elements with fantastic storytelling, uses poly-perspective narration and a variety of voices. Yet, the perspective remains that of the colonizers and Timm does not appropriate the voice of the Herero and Nama. He interweaves three clearly separated narrative strands in which his protagonist, the heterodiegetic narrator, as well as a variety of historical European authors of official documents have their say. One narrative strand tells the invented story of the character Gottschalk, a German chief veterinarian, and is partly interspersed with his diary entries. A second episodic narrative strand contains analepses to the pre-colonial and early colonial periods in chapters entitled "Landeskunde" (best translated as "Regional Studies"). In the third documentary narrative strand, Timm assembles documents of German colonial history, more precisely letters, war reports, memos, poems and newspaper

(Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008), 34–138; Britta Schilling, *Postcolonial Germany: Memories of Empire in a Decolonized Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

5 Gustav Frenssen, *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest. Ein Feldzugsbericht von Gustav Frenssen* (Berlin: Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906). Cf. also Rolf Parr's article on "Nach Gustav Frenssens *Peter Moor*: Kolonialisten, Herero und deutsche Schutztruppen bei Hans Grimm und Uwe Timm," *Sprache im technischen Zeitalter* 41/168 (2003), 395–410; Christiane Bürger, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte(n): Der Genozid in Namibia und die Geschichtsschreibung der DDR und BRD* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 55–60.

6 Cf. Stefan Hermes, *Fahrten nach Südwest: Die Kolonialkriege gegen die Herero und Nama in der deutschen Literatur (1904–2004)* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009).

7 This chapter cites from the revised edition from 2020 with a postscript by Robert Habeck (München: dtv, [1978] 2020). All following quotations refer to this edition. I also want to point towards the general political climate in Germany at the time: in the 1960s, the Socialist German Student League, for instance, toppled colonial monuments in order to end the glorification of colonial history and to call for a reappraisal of the past. Among those present when the Hamburg monument of the colonial governor Wissmann was toppled in 1968 was the author Uwe Timm; he addressed this event in his novels *Heißer Sommer* (1974) and *Rot* (2001). For more historical background, cf. Dirk Göttsche, Monika Albrecht, Axel Dunker and Jan Gerstner, "Nachkriegszeit II (ca. 1965–1989)," in *Handbuch Postkolonialismus und Literatur*, eds. Dirk Göttsche et al. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 282–296; Christine Ott, *Der Schriftsteller als Geschichtsschreiber und Ethnograph: Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Studie zu Uwe Timms Morenga* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012), 9. With his 1981 illustrated book *Deutsche Kolonien*, Timm also contributed to making the atrocities of German colonial history visible and bringing them to the awareness of society, cf. Uwe Timm, *Deutsche Kolonien* (München: Autoren-Edition 1981).

articles. Although such a strategy suggests historical authenticity, these references cannot necessarily always be linked to a historical source text, while in other cases they indeed refer to actually existing material.[8] All three narrative strands deal with questions and complexities of morality, yet judgments are rarely formulated explicitly.

Timm named the novel after the leader of the Herero and Nama uprisings against German colonial authority, Jacobus Morenga (1875–1907),[9] whose political goal was a change from German to British colonial rule.[10] On September 19, 1907, Morenga died during the uprising's battles. Despite the title of the novel, Timm does not make him the protagonist. The focus of the story is thus not Morenga, but the veterinarian Gottschalk, who volunteers for the German *Schutztruppen* in German Southwest Africa. It is his job to cure the troops' horses and look after the cattle. He comes to know some Herero and Nama better, but also witnesses them being tortured, humiliated and killed. In the course of the novel, he feels increasingly out of place amidst colonial violence. Finally, he meets the leader Morenga, whose activities he had been following for some time. He broods over the idea of affiliating himself with the insurgents or the British but will not, or cannot, take this step. Instead, he stays with the German troops but stops working. He also ceases collecting, archiving and teaching knowledge that could be used by the Germans to the detriment of the locals – while these are admittedly small acts of refusal, they do not amount to full blown rebellion against the Germans.

The protagonist is not concerned with forced migration or escape; instead, Gottschalk decides to go to German Southwest Africa voluntarily. The issue here is migration from a position of power. Together with the other *Schutztruppler*, he does not come as a displaced person or a refugee, but as an imperial colonizer who wants to subdue the land and the people. He seems to have had little awareness of this fact and its consequences before his departure but becomes conscious of it during the novel. Timm does not explicitly convey these insights by reproducing Gottschalk's or the narrator's thoughts, but rather through spatial experiences and evaluations of forms of movement. In the following, I will

8 Herbert Uerlings, "Die Erneuerung des historischen Romans durch interkulturelles Erzählen: Zur Entwicklung der Gattung bei Alfred Döblin, Uwe Timm, Hans Christoph Buch und anderen" In *Travellers in Time and Space: The German Historical Novel/Reisende durch Zeit und Raum: Der deutschsprachige historische Roman*, eds. Osman Durrani, and Julian Preece (Amsterdam: Rodopi 2001), 131.

9 Ott, *Der Schriftsteller als Geschichtsschreiber und Ethnograph*, 19. The South African historian Neville Alexander has pointed out that the latter's real name was "Marengo," or, more rarely "Maringu" or "Marenka" (quoted in Uerlings, *Die Erneuerung des historischen Romans durch interkulturelles Erzählen*, 137).

10 At that time, complete independence from colonial rule still seemed entirely utopian.

examine three constellations of space and mobility which condense Gottschalk's changing attitude toward colonialism: first, discomfort with common forms of movement, second, failed migration to another culture, and third, mobility with (almost) no contact to the ground. In the following analyses, the novel is not understood as postcolonial, but as anti-colonial.[11] I agree here with Dunker and Hamann who point out that a position of being in-between is only realized in the location of the protagonists, but not in the narration.[12] They show that although multiple voices are employed in the novel, it still remains a monophonic narrative, since the evaluative perspective is solely German.[13]

Some of the motifs discussed below have already been touched upon, but on the basis of other concepts of space. Haman, for example, uses the concept of "threshold space" to describe a space of transition, of approach and mixture, in which an effect of proximity and distance is conveyed at the same time. He treats Gottschalk's stay in Morenga's hostile camp, his camel ride and the concluding chapter with the balloon ride as such threshold spaces. His argument is that Gottschalk's awe when being confronted with that which is foreign to him allows him to find his own self and a stable identity in an open space of possibility. In the following, however, I will show that the protagonist does not succeed at all in finding stability.

I

At the beginning of the novel, upon his arrival in German Southwest Africa in Swakopmund, Gottschalk is carried ashore by a local man. This striking initial motif of the narrative evokes power, a sense of superiority and oppression on the part of the German colonizers through dehumanization and devaluation by degrading a human being to a means of transportation:

11 For the labelling of the novel as 'postcolonial', see Dirk Göttsche, *Remembering Africa: The Rediscovery of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 75–83, and Michaela Holdenried, "Neukartierungen deutscher Kolonialgebiete: Postkoloniale Schreibweisen in Uwe Timms Roman *Morenga*," *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik* 2 (2011), 129–149, here 147.

12 Axel Dunker and Christof Hamann, "Antikolonialismus oder Postkolonialismus? Uwe Timms Roman *Morenga* und die Germanistik," in *Postkolonialismus und (Inter-)Medialität: Perspektiven der Grenzüberschreitung im Spannungsfeld von Literatur, Musik, Fotografie, Theater und Film*, eds. Laura Beck and Julian Osthues (Bielefeld: transcript 2016), 343–362, here 343.

13 Dunker and Hamann, "Antikolonialismus oder Postkolonialismus," 350.

> Der Mann war nur mit einer zerrissenen Anzughose bekleidet. Gottschalk fühlte die schwitzende schwarze Haut, er roch den sauren Schweiß. Er ekelte sich. Mit einer sanften Drehung wurde er in den Sand gestellt. Gottschalk stand auf afrikanischem Boden. Er glaubte der Boden schwanke unter seinen Füßen.[14]

Three central aspects are related to these sensual impressions. Firstly, Gottschalk is being carried and feels uncomfortable. This movement can be seen as metaphor for the exploitation of the locals which Gottschalk comes to reject. Secondly, it is followed by another form of movement, which will be constantly inconvenient for Gottschalk from now on: walking on African soil. Thirdly, the sour smell of sweat that Gottschalk perceives on his carrier contrasts with the olfactory condensation of his knowledge about Africa that had motivated Gottschalk's migration. As the son of a colonial goods merchant, Gottschalk had memorized the smells of the far-away Spice Islands as a composition of the following spices:

> Zimt, braune Borkenstücke aus Ceylon; Vanille, verschrumpelte braunschwarze Schoten aus Guatemala; Muskat, graurillige Fruchtkerne aus Kamerun; der süße, schwere Duft der Gewürznelken, dickstengelige Blütenknospen, die von den Gewürzinseln der Molukkensee kamen.[15]

This situation turns out to be a symbolic condensation of the experience he makes in the colony: living to the detriment of others. His original motivation to move to German Southwest Africa is perverted and never mentioned again after this first occurrence:

> [. . .] die Sehnsucht nach dem Neuen, die aus seiner Kindheit zu kommen schien, nach einer Ferne; eine Neugierde, die alles Gewohnheitsmäßige, Erstarrte aufbrach, in der man sich plötzlich und überraschend als ein anderer wiederfand [. . .] Der Zimtgeruch im Laden seines Vaters.[16]

14 Timm, *Morenga*, 9: "The man was dressed only in torn suit pants. Gottschalk felt the sweating black skin, he smelled the sour sweat. He was disgusted. With a gentle twist, he was placed in the sand. Gottschalk stood on African soil. He thought the ground was swaying under his feet." (Here, as in the following, my own translations.)

15 Timm, *Morenga*, 20: "Cinnamon, brown bark piece[s] from Ceylon; vanilla, shriveled brown-black pods from Guatemala; nutmeg, grey rilled fruit seeds from Cameroon; the sweet, heavy scent of cloves, thick-stalked flower buds that came from the Spice Islands of the Moluccas Sea."

16 Timm, *Morenga*, 164: "[. . .] the longing for the new, which seemed to come from his childhood, for a distance; a curiosity that broke open everything habitual, ossified, in which one suddenly and surprisingly found oneself as another [. . .] The smell of cinnamon in his father's store."

None of these spices or smells, however, is mentioned during Gottschalk's stay in Africa. Instead, the smell of human sweat serves as a concise symbol for the consequences of colonial migration for the inhabitants of the colonized territories.

In the beginning of the novel, Gottschalk sticks to his plan to impose a German 'model of space' onto the foreign soil in order to install a sense of home.[17] He is looking for farmland on which to settle down as a farmer after a few years of service, a place where he plans to raise cattle and horses, but also to have a family big enough to build a small orchestra to play German baroque music. He does not question his claim to buy land and to run a farm.[18] In his diaries, there are sketches for his farm which show that the huts of the native workers are placed very close to the farmhouse. There are also plans for a school where his children are supposed to be educated, together with African children. However, these plans quickly cease to play a role, and this certainly has something to do with the fact that Gottschalk never feels at ease when he is at rest. His rooms in the barracks and camps are associated with paralysis, passivity, lack of perspective and fruitless brooding. On the other hand, though, migration and mobility can often have negative connotations. Whenever Gottschalk touches the ground with his feet, as in marching or even dancing, he feels awkward and clumsy. Movement is only positive for Gottschalk when he uses a means of transportation and can see the sky at the same time, for instance during the train ride, the numerous rides on horses and later on camels and the final balloon ride. If this is not possible, Gottschalk feels cramped in these situations, "verschnürt", corded and tied up, as he calls it.[19]

II

In Gottschalk, Timm has created a character who is sensitive and open-minded enough to undergo a process of moral change that allows him to come closer to the Nama people. Gottschalk's approach to the, to him, "foreign culture" proceeds from learning the Nama language to an affair with a Nama girl named Katharina, which fails, however, because Gottschalk always remains entrenched in his soldierly

17 I have defined 'models of space' as knowledge configurations about space, which consist of information about the materiality of a space as well as about typical sequences of events located in that space. See Katrin Dennerlein, *Narratologie des Raumes* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter 2009), 178–189.

18 Cf. also Kara Baumbach, "Verdrängte Kolonialgeschichte: Zu Uwe Timms *Morenga*," *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 97.2 (2005), 213–231, here 219.

19 Timm, *Morenga*, 15.

identity and in stereotypical European thinking.[20] In general, Timm uses Gottschalk to illuminate German perceptions and clichés of Southwest African culture that are meant to be positive but ultimately distort the culture. For instance, Gottschalk ascribes sensuality, or even the ability of "Herzensbildung" ["an education of the heart"],[21] to the Nama and Herero. He situates intellectuality in the European and emotionality in the indigenous population, which in turn activates and confirms evolutionist schemas about the development of society. In the course of the novel, Gottschalk perceives more and more discrepancies between his own humanitarian aspirations and the deplorable conditions in the colony, as will be sketched out in the following.

Gottschalk possesses knowledge that is of high demand to the colony: He is in charge of curing the sick and strained horses and oxen, and he has to take care of the stolen cattle herds. As time goes by, he also invents dentures for the starving herds of cattle that have lost their teeth due to an epidemic, and he introduces camels as mounts for the troop.[22] In addition, he passes on his knowledge to the captured Africans in order to help them to recover and cure their beloved cattle.[23] However, it turns out that these people are rented out to Germans who use their knowledge for their own benefit. Moreover, his help for the animals also contrasts harshly with his helplessness towards the imprisoned Herero and Nama who are left to starve in concentration camps. Hence, the fact that his knowledge and skills are used to outmanoeuvre and defeat the insurgent African rebels proves to be problematic for Gottschalk. He cures the cavalry's horses, and thereby supports the German's soldiers, and it is he who has the idea of equipping the German troops with camels, which are much faster than horses and can last much longer at a stretch without food or water. In fact, the camels later prove to be a decisive advantage for the German troops in defeating the insurgents around Morenga.

Despite thinking about crossing over to the Nama for a long time, Gottschalk never takes the decisive step. Passively, however, by allowing himself to be captured in a raid, Gottschalk can still make an important experience in a kind of third space. The concept of third space, conceived by Homi K. Bhabha, refers to a space of cultural confrontation, translation and negotiation, which allows for a (limited) change of patterns of identification during the interaction of the participants. Master and servant, colonizer and colonized, hegemonial and subaltern encounter each other and move beyond the certainties and stabilities offered by traditional

20 Timm, *Morenga*, 176, 264, 343.
21 Timm, *Morenga*, 177.
22 Timm, *Morenga*, 178, 287.
23 Timm, *Morenga*, 177, 429.

roles. According to Bhabha, something entirely new emerges from such encounters in the third space, namely hybridity, which makes it possible to overcome authoritarian discourses.[24]

In *Morenga*, such a possibility of toppled hierarchies and overturned spatial orders is only cautiously hinted at. Gottschalk first attempts to show respect to Morenga in the ritualized motion of a handshake, but Morenga ignores the gesture.[25] Gottschalk then has a conversation with Morenga in Nama.[26] As a consequence, Gottschalk realizes that the colonizers' position of civilizational and humanitarian superiority, which he had assumed, is an illusion. In the conversation, Morenga emphasizes that the uprising will fight to the last man, "[d]amit *ihr* und *wir* Menschen bleiben können" ["to enable *you* and *us* to remain human beings"].[27] Thus, Gottschalk realizes during the conversation that it is the rebellious Nama, and not the Germans, who are guided by humanitarian and moral standards.

While the African rebels treat their prisoners respectably and give Gottschalk a cart to bring back the wounded, the *Schutztruppen* shoot their captured and kill civilians. At the departure, Morenga finally offers Gottschalk his hand.[28] Later in the novel, Gottschalk's thoughts provide an answer to the question of why he did not join the Nama despite the values he shares with them:

> Einen Moment habe er versucht die Bewegungen Morengas nachzuahmen [. . .]. Aber es wollte ihm nicht gelingen. Er verkrampfte sich regelrecht. Es war sogar entsetzlich lächerlich. Und noch während er versuchte zu tanzen, und trotz seines dunen Kopfes, war ihm klar, dass er nicht würde bleiben können.[29]

This passage indicates how cultural differences express themselves physically here. Gottschalk senses "eine Ferne, die ihm nicht überbrückbar sch[ei]nt" ["a distance that does not seem bridgeable to him"].[30] On the one hand, it is his cultural difference to the African insurgents he feels here, but on the other hand, it is also the experience of an "otherness" in himself:

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24 For a very concise reconstruction of this concept cf. also Tobias Döring, "Postkoloniale Räume," in *Handbuch Literatur und Raum*, eds. Jörg Dünne and Andreas Mahler (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2015), 137–147.

25 Timm, *Morenga*, 415.

26 Ibid.

27 Timm, *Morenga*, 395; emphasis in the original.

28 Timm, *Morenga*, 117.

29 Timm, *Morenga*, 439: "For a moment he tried to imitate Morenga's movements [. . .]. But he did not want to succeed. He really tensed up. It was even excruciatingly ridiculous. And even as he tried to dance, and despite his dazed head, he realized that he would not be able to stay."

30 Timm, *Morenga*, 438.

> Diese Menschen waren ihm nah und doch zugleich so unendlich fern. Hätte er bleiben wollen, er hätte anders denken und fühlen lernen müssen. Radikal umdenken. Mit den Sinnen denken.[31]

A dichotomy of spaces and associated roles, modes of behaviour, thinking and perception is described – one that can neither be overcome nor be dissolved into a synthesis. Thus, Gottschalk's insight from the encounter with Morenga, which he notes in his diary on 30 March 1906, is that he was not able to "[das Innere] verstehen [zu] lernen als geologische Formation. Also eine Geologie der Seele mit ihren Brüchen, Verschiebungen, Sedimenten, Ablagerungen und Erosionen" ["to learn to understand the interior as a geological formation. That is, a geology of the soul with its fractures, shifts, sediments, deposits and erosions"].[32]

Following the meeting with Morenga, Gottschalk acknowledges the injustices in the colony and submits his letter of resignation. The request for dismissal is symbolic of the recognition and acknowledgement of the asymmetrical power relations in the colony. The encounter in Morenga's camp can does not, and cannot, change the colonial power relations and their devastating consequences for the African population. Beyond this temporally and spatially limited third space of the encounter, everything remains the same. Gottschalk cannot bridge the "[Riß] [z]wischen dem, was er tat, und dem, was er dachte [. . .]" ["the crack between what he did and what he thought"].[33] Only later, when observing the clouds, during the balloon flight and in a dream, can he partially overcome it.

III

However, when Gottschalk's request to leave is approved, he feels quite liberated and on the journey to the ship in Keetmannshoop he takes the opportunity to ride a racing camel for the first time;

> Als Gottschalk dann aber das Tier in den Trab brachte, war es, als höbe es vom Boden ab, es begann, was Dermigny als den Kamelflug bezeichnet hatte. [. . .] Gottschalk ritt auf seinem Rennkamel durch die nächtliche Landschaft, über sich die Sterne, sehr nahe, der Rogen der Nacht, und dann begann er zu summen, dann zu singen, er war wie beschwipst, und all

31 Timm, *Morenga*, 439: "These people were close to him and yet at the same time so infinitely distant. If he had wanted to stay, he would have had to learn to think and feel differently. Radically rethink. Think with the senses."
32 Timm, *Morenga*, 435.
33 Timm, *Morenga*, 284.

> seine Angst fiel von ihm ab. Zwischendurch lachte er laut und rezitierte mit eingestreuten Klicklauten: So komm! Dass wir ein Eigenes suchen, so weit es auch ist.[34]

During this ride, the liberation from a morally ambivalent situation and the hope for new possibilities are connected with flying, with seeing the stars and feeling in line with the poet Hölderlin, whom he implicitly cites in these lines. As has often been overlooked, this is not the core political statement of the novel. Rather, these are idealistic, wishful thoughts of a character limited to an extremely rare form of mobility, namely that of flight.

After leaving the service, Gottschalk can no longer ride camels. He therefore shifts his attention to observing flight, or more precisely the flight of the clouds. While he waits for a positive decision for his request to leave, he becomes completely immobile and sits for weeks on the porch of his lodgings in Ukamas. He deteriorates physically, and spends his time only on meteorological observations of the sky which he enters in his diary in a poetically overdramatized form. In the end, all that remains for Gottschalk in the colony are these meteorological observations, which he records with meticulousness and creative neologisms in his new diary. The sensual cloud language that emerged from Gottschalk's encounter with Morenga in the third space is an example of cultural hybridity:

> 12. Januar 1907. Morgens bei Sonnenaufgang im Südosten ein wolliger Teppich blaßrosa Färbung, die Ränder ausgefranst und lichtgrau. Vormittags blauschnigiert sich der Teppich langsam gegen Süden. Nachmittags Wollrollkroogen stahlgrau gepunzt. Abends gegen 17.20 Uhr: Verweisung der Driftwolken nach Norden. Flaumig federich."[35]

Movement here takes place only in the distant space of perception, while in the real-world location of perception things remain unchanged.[36] Gottschalks tells a major at the end, when asked for the reason for his discharge, that he no longer wants to "beim Abschlachten unschuldiger Menschen beteiligen" ["participate in

34 Timm, *Morenga*, 446: "But when Gottschalk then brought the animal into a trot, it was as if it lifted off the ground, it began what Dermigny had called the camel flight. [. . .] Gottschalk rode on his racing camel through the night landscape, above him the stars, very close, the roe of the night, and then he began to hum, then to sing, he was as if tipsy, and all his fear fell from him. In between he laughed loudly and recited with interspersed clicking sounds: So come! That we seek something of our own, far as it might be."

35 Timm, *Morenga*, 415: "12 January 1907. In the morning at sunrise in the southeast, a woolly carpet of pale pink colouring, the edges frayed and light gray. In the morning, the carpet turns blue slowly toward the south. In the afternoon, woollen roller croogen punctured steel-gray. In the evening around 5.20 p.m.: referral of drift clouds to the north. Downy feathery."

36 For the concept of "space of perception" ("Wahrnehmungsraum"), see Dennerlein, *Narratologie des Raumes*, 148–160, and for the definition of "setting" ("Schauplatz"), 127–132.

the slaughter of innocent people"].[37] It becomes clear that Gottschalk does not want to choose either the side of the Germans or the side of the Nama. This changeability, expressed in Gottschalk's own language as he describes the oscillating ethereal cloud-formations, marks the constant negotiation of moral integrity that is negotiated time and again throughout Timm's novel.

Both the clouds and the balloon in which Gottschalk finds himself, move through an interstitial space between heaven and earth, and at a distance from the actual conditions in society. The postscript with the balloon flight in the final chapter can be read as a politically meaningless connection to the cruel events in the colony:

> Die Ballonfahrt ist mehr als eine Möglichkeit der Fortbewegung, Ballonfahrt ist Kunst, ein Kunstwerk, indem Ballonfahrer, der Ballon, Wind und Wetter, aber auch die Landschaft zusammenfinden. Nichts wird ausgebeutet, wenn man einmal vom Gas absieht. Kein Mensch, kein Tier gequält oder geschunden, alle Teile finden spielerisch zueinander. Man treibt und lässt sich treiben.[38]

These descriptions evoke a kind of utopian openness and ethereality that, as Holdenried states, reflect an idea of a harmonious, paradisiacal coexistence without exploitation.[39] However, it is a quite limited utopia, tailored specifically to the protagonist. The harmony consists only of landscape, sky, technology and art: the human role of the balloonist is determined by technical skill only. Questions of potential coexistence between the passenger and the balloonist do not even come up, and issues of land ownership, exploitation of land or supply shortages conveniently become obsolete in the escape into the airspace. Gottschalk appreciates this state because he can let himself drift, does not have to decide anything, or to act. He assumes that this means that he cannot be or do wrong.

Conclusion

Gottschalk emigrates because he shares the values of the colonizers and considers Germany's claim for place and power to be legitimate. His arrival is supported by deep-reaching power structures that have formed and continue to form global

37 Timm, *Morenga*, 441.

38 Timm, *Morenga*, 442: "Ballooning is more than a means of transportation, ballooning is art, a work of art in that balloonist, the balloon, wind and weather, but also the landscape come together. Nothing is exploited, except for the gas. No human being, no animal tortured or maltreated, all parts playfully find each other. One drifts and lets oneself drift."

39 Cf. Holdenried, "Neukartierungen deutscher Kolonialgebiete," 147.

relations. He is on the side of the rulers who have already realized their territorial interests and are now defending them. The gap between his expectations and the reality of migrating and being on the inside is narrated and visually condensed by way of several spatial and movement-related constellations.

Timm writes his novel in 1978, as a reaction both to Germany's coming to terms with its colonial past and to its dealing with war crimes from the Second World War. The solution that he lets his protagonist Gottschalk find can not be understood as a real suggestion for these problems; instead, it sketches out the consequences of migration of those who hold power, while also revealing a helpless, evasive way of dealing with moral quandaries and ethical impasses. At the same time, the volatility of those moving across the globe voluntarily, for example driven by colonial, expansionist endeavours, becomes visible in a very concrete way. The knowledge of the negative consequences of this form of migration would actually require active action and resistance. Avoiding physical, affective and intellectual contact with reality is clearly not a solution to be followed, as Timm subtly shows, instead asking the reader to critically question their own moral stances.

Timm is well aware of the fact that the colonial migration narrated in *Morenga* is told from an author of the colonizer's land of origin. In the panel discussion "50 Years of Morenga," part of the lecture series "Narrating Africa" at the German Literature Archive Marbach in June 2021, Timm expressed the wish that a writer from present-day Namibia might tell the story of Morenga from his perspective, to complement Timm's view with an African one.[40] That would indeed be a desirable project and a very important addition to already existing novels that depict other aspects of the Herero and Nama uprisings from different angles.[41]

40 See Uwe Timm and Martin Hielscher, "50 Years of Morenga," in conversation with Jan Bürger, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4kMJIHGoBg, *Lecture series on Narrating Africa*, German Literature Archive Marbach, 16 June 2021 (7 February 2023).

41 For an analysis of such fiction, see Coletta M. Kandemiri's *Literary Archives of Conflict, the Decoloniality of Materialities and Resilience in Selected Narratives of Genocide in Namibia*, http://hdl.handle.net/11070/3002, PhD thesis, University of Namibia, 2021 (7 February 2023), which analyses *The Lie of the Land* by David Jaspar Utley (2017), *The Weeping Graves of Our Ancestors* by Rukee Tjingaete (2017), *The Scattering* by Lauri Kubuitsile (2016), *Parts Unknown* by Zirk van den Berg (2018) and *Mama Namibia* by Mari Serebrov (2013). None of the novels, however, is about Morenga.

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Miriam Wallraven

Chapter 10
"No narrative to make sense of what had happened": The Genres of Narrating Migration during the Yugoslav Wars in English-Speaking Literature

Introduction: Finding Narratives for Communicating Knowledge about Migration in Life Writing

In their book *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson ask for the "processes or methods of knowledge production"[1] and pose the following questions: "Does the narrative itself generate alternative sources of knowledge?" and "What kind of knowledge could the reading of the life narrative produce for readers?"[2] Although rarely foregrounded, such questions become particularly crucial when dealing with life writing about migration which produces new knowledge of two cultural contexts and of being situated between cultures.

In the following, I analyse three texts which focus on migration as a consequence of the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s:[3] Kenan Trebinčević's *The Bosnia List: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return* (2014),[4] Atka Reid's and Hana Schofield's *Goodbye Sarajevo: A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival* (2011),[5] as well as Sara Nović's *Girl at War: A Novel* (2015).[6] These texts provide important case studies for life writing about migration in general and are characterised by the following features: They all deal with forced migration to English-speaking countries, such

1 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 177.

2 Smith and Watson, *Autobiography*, 177.

3 The Croatian War of Independence and the Bosnian War can be dated from 1991/2 until 1995, whereas the Kosovo War took place from 1998 until 1999. Cf. Catherine Baker, *The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 133–140.

4 Kenan Trebinčević and Susan Shapiro, *The Bosnia List: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

5 Atka Reid and Hana Schofield, *Goodbye Sarajevo: A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

6 Sara Nović, *Girl at War* (New York: Random House, 2015).

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as the US and New Zealand, as a result of the Yugoslav Wars. All three texts are written in English, thus providing a contribution to what is often called "new world literature,"[7] a literature that transcends national contexts and the confines of traditional philologies as a dynamic transnational literature written by migrants between cultures.[8] These three texts, I argue, aim at creating "contact zones"[9] between the Balkans[10] and the Anglophone reader and thus communicate and narrate knowledge about migration and the cause of it. As is the case with many wars, there was a lack of public awareness beyond Europe itself about the Yugoslav Wars, which was mainly due to the geographical and cultural distance to the US or New Zealand, the political complexity of these wars as well as partial and sporadic media coverage. The texts insistently thematise this fact and the need to find narratives to convey knowledge to Anglophone readers, which is a prerequisite for understanding the texts and the narrators' or protagonists' experiences of migration.

To what extent does knowledge about migration come to matter within literary genres and how can we conceptualise the influence different genres, such as novel or autobiography, exert on processes of knowledge formation? How can such texts influence the readers' – our – awareness of migratory experiences? The protagonist in Nović's *Girl at War* highlights her difficulties to find a narrative for expressing her experiences: "[. . .] all these years later I still had no

7 Löffler argues that this "new world literature" is a literature written by language changers who write in a language which is not their mother tongue. Cf. Sigrid Löffler, *Die neue Weltliteratur und ihre großen Erzähler* (München: C. H. Beck, 2014), 15. Also cf. Heidi Rösch, "Migrationsliteratur als neue Weltliteratur?" *Sprachkunst* XXXV/2004: 96, 108.

8 See Löffler, *Weltliteratur*, 17.

9 According to Pratt, "contact zones" are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4. The conceptualisation of such spaces based on the negotiation of power relations is not only applicable to colonialism and slavery but also to migration.

10 As a bridge between East and West, the Balkans turn out to be highly significant as a space of projection and othering. In her influential study *Imagining the Balkans*, Maria Todorova analyses the Balkans and their image as the "Other of Europe" created by travelogues, diplomatic accounts, journalism and fiction. Todorova explores the discursive strategies of othering and differentiates between Said's concept of Orientalism and what she calls "Balkanism." Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Also compare Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) and Diana Mishkova, *Beyond Balkanism: The Scholarly Politics of Region Making* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

narrative to make sense of what had happened."[11] The three texts explore various strategies to create narratives not only for expressing experiences but also for providing information to the readers, since one trajectory unites them: communicating knowledge to increase the awareness of an Anglophone audience about the Yugoslav Wars and migration caused by it.

The "Autobiographical Pact," the "Fictional Pact" and the "True Story Pact": Narration, Imagination and the Communication of Knowledge about Migration in Life Writing

Following Smith and Watson, I understand life writing as comprising different genres, for example autobiography, biography, novel, or history writing.[12] One of the most central features of autobiography is its position between fact and fiction. Volker Depkat highlights the notion of "fact" as pivotal to an analysis of autobiography:

> The problem of fact and fiction forms the epistemological core of autobiography. A fact, according to Merriam Webster (2018), is 'something that has actual existence' or 'a piece of information presented as having objective reality'. As such, the notion of fact is carried by a philosophical realism that accords to things known or perceived an existence that is independent of the human mind. Facts, therefore, are tied to the concept of objective truth, i.e. the idea that things exist independent of whether anyone is thinking about or perceiving them.[13]

In "The Autobiographical Pact" (1975/1985), Philippe Lejeune emphasises the reader's role in distinguishing between different forms of life writing:

> How to distinguish autobiography from the autobiographical novel? We must admit that, if we remain on the level of analysis within the text, there is *no difference*. All the methods that autobiography uses to convince us of the authenticity of its narrative can be imitated by the novel, and often have been imitated. This is accurate as long as we limit ourselves to the text minus the title page; as soon as we include the latter in the text, with the name of the author, we make use of a general textual criterion, the identity ('identicalness') of the

11 Nović, *Girl*, 100–101.

12 Smith and Watson, *Autobiography*, 3.

13 Volker Depkat, "Facts and Fiction," in *Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction*, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 280–286.

> *name* (author-narrator-protagonist). The autobiographical pact is the affirmation in the text of this identity, referring back in the final analysis to the *name* of the author on the cover.[14]

The reader thus has to agree to the "autobiographical pact" in contrast to the "fictional pact."[15] With that, he or she enters into an agreement on how to read each text.

Certainly, readers of *The Bosnia List* and *Goodbye Sarajevo*, texts that reveal themselves paratextually as autobiographical by their subtitles which are "A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return" and "A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival," would have to agree to the "autobiographical pact." As a contrast, readers of *Girl at War*, which presents itself as "a novel," would be forced to agree to the "fictional pact." However, I will show that the Anglophone audience of all three texts has to agree to what I call the "true story pact" first; this means that the audience has to believe that the knowledge communicated – about war and the experiences of migration – is "true."

The term "true" in this context has to be understood in several ways: First, as referentiality to information outside the text, which Lejeune describes: "As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are *referential* texts; exactly like scientific of historical discourse, they claim to provide information about a 'reality' exterior to the text, and so to submit to a text of *verification*. Their aim is not simply verisimilitude, but resemblance to the truth."[16] Second, this "truth" has to be read as "subjective truth." As Smith/Watson argue, "[w]hile autobiographical narratives may contain 'facts,' they are not a factual history about a particular time, person, or event. Rather they offer subjective 'truth' rather than 'fact.'"[17] Depkat likewise stresses that we cannot look for "objective truth" in autobiography but rather for "subjective truthfulness."[18] This "subjective truthfulness" is also based on – and this is the third factor – the literary and narrative strategies for creating meaning in the form of a coherent narrative by selection, omission and emplotment.

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14 Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," in *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 3–30.

15 Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 14–15.

16 Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 22. Also compare Shen/Xu who state that "[t]he existence of the truth-determining 'extratextuality' and the truth-related 'intertextuality' bear on autobiography's structure and interpretation in various ways." Dan Shen and Dejin Xu, "Intratextuality, Extratextuality, Intertextuality: Unreliability in Autobiography versus Fiction," *Poetics Today* 28.1 (2007): 45.

17 Smith and Watson, *Autobiography*, 10.

18 Depkat, "Facts," 281.

Depkat writes that "every autobiography is an act of communication."[19] Which textual strategies do life-writing texts employ for the "true story pact" to work? Three parameters can be identified: First, the communication of knowledge on a paratextual level which comprises subtitles, maps, prologues and epilogues, bibliographies, or notes.[20] Second, the communication of knowledge on a diegetic level, where the author or protagonist searches for an understanding of the political situation, of war and migration. Third, the creation of migratory "contact zones"[21] between cultures in the story. The author or narrator undergoes a development in the text and thus becomes a mediator between cultures and shares his/her experience and knowledge as a migrant between cultures.

"They didn't know": Communicating Knowledge about the Yugoslav War and Migration from Bosnia to the US in Kenan Trebinčević's *The Bosnia List*: *A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return* (2014)

The Bosnia List: A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return (2014) by Kenan Trebinčević and co-authored by the journalist Susan Shapiro[22] traces the story of the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars experienced by an eleven-year-old Muslim boy in Bosnia. He narrates the tensions leading to an ethnic cleansing campaign, his family's suffering and emigration to the US. After two decades in Chicago, his father wants to

19 Depkat, "Facts," 283.

20 According to Genette, "paratexts are those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader: titles, forewords, epigraphs, and publishers' jacket copy are part of a book's private and public history." Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). n. pag.

21 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4.

22 The collaborator Susan Shapiro is neither an editor, nor a transcriber or interviewer, which are the categories for collaborative autobiography presented in Smith and Watson, *Autobiography*, 178. This fact is hinted at in the postscript when Trebinčević writes: "On the day I finished the first draft of *The Bosnia List* [. . .]" (Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 295), suggesting that the draft is written by him and would most likely be revised on a stylistic level by Susan Shapiro who does not make her presence felt in the autobiography and who is merely introduced as "an American-born Jewish journalist" (Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, n. pag.) in the paratextual material preceding the text. Ultimately the extent of collaboration is not thematised in this text.

visit their homeland again. Trebinčević writes down a list of what he wants to do on his return, for example confronting the former next-door neighbour who stole from his mother or seeing the concentration camp where his father and brother were imprisoned. Back in Bosnia, however, he is faced with unexpected stories from other perspectives.

According to the three parameters of knowledge communication in "true stories" which I have outlined above, three steps for the communication of knowledge can be analysed in this text; first, the paratextual which constitutes a first step for the communication of knowledge. Trebinčević's choice of genre is already indicated by the subtitle "A Memoir of War, Exile, and Return."[23] The paratextual matter also includes a map of "Former Yugoslavia post-1995 Dayton Agreement,"[24] which prefigures the text's embeddedness in the historical and political events. The back matter comprises material that is explicitly geared at providing information for the Anglophone reader: First, a "Glossary of Names, Places, and Terms"[25] provides very basic information about where the "Balkan Peninsula (aka the Balkans)"[26] or "Bosnia" or "Yugoslavia" are located and explains some basic terms such as "Bosniak."[27] Here, it becomes clear that the author does not presuppose any political knowledge at all. Second, apart from a list of "Recommended Books,"[28] the autobiography includes an index,[29] which contains political entries ranging from "Battle of Kosovo" or "Bosnia, independence from Yugoslavia declared"[30] to very personal entries such as "Emina, Grandma" or "Fatima, Great-aunt."[31] Here, the entries suggest that the political and the personal are accorded the same importance and are intimately intertwined. The reader is thus invited to enter into the "true story pact" through the utilisation of different paratextual devices. Concerning the effect of a paratext, Genette argues that "more than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or – a

23 Since this text exhibits all traits that Lejeune proposes as central characteristics of autobiography, I will refer to this text as autobiography rather than as memoir; compare Lejeune's definition of autobiography as "[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on the individual life, in particular on the development of his personality." Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 4. Also compare his more expanded explanations on the genre, 4–5.

24 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, n. pag.

25 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 301–308.

26 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 305.

27 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 306.

28 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 309.

29 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 311–320.

30 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 311.

31 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 313.

word Borges used apropos of a preface – a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back."[32] When he states that the paratext signifies "a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction,"[33] he effectively conceives of a paratext as a "contact zone" between the text and the extratextual realm. In *The Bosnia List*, these paratextual "contact zones" function as indispensible devices of communicating knowledge for an Anglophone audience.

The communication of knowledge that is likewise central throughout the text signifies the second step of the "true story pact." Trebinčević highlights the important role of his older brother as well as the media:

> "You know those tanks on television last week?" he said. "The Serbs were attacking Croatia and Slovenia." – "Why?" I asked Eldin, who never talked down to me just because I was younger. "Because after Milosevic rigged the election, the Croatians had enough and voted for sovereignty," he explained.[34]

In this and other dialogues, the reference to news coverage combined with his brother's explanations illustrates how the author needs a mediator who explains the war to him. For this purpose, his brother is introduced as reliable and truthful: "I wanted to become a history buff, like my brother."[35] In this context, the term "history buff" serves to legitimate him as a mediator of knowledge, which is expanded by comparing him to a "professor" from the perspective of the child: "My brother often recited statistics, dates, and theories off the top of his head. His vast storehouse of knowledge awed me; he could have been a political science professor."[36] Later, when he grows up and undergoes a development in the text, the author himself becomes a mediator between cultures once he has migrated. His double identity contrasts significantly with the divisions according to religious background he had experienced in Bosnia, since he feels proud of his religious and cultural hybridity: "I relished my double identity, being bilingual, travelling the world. Proud to be a Bosnian Muslim, I was also privileged to be American."[37] Situating himself as belonging to two cultures, he underscores his ability to mediate between these cultures for the reader.

One effective strategy for mediating between cultures consists of comparisons. In sentences such as "We shared stuffed cabbage while listening to Dirty

32 Genette, *Paratexts*, 1–2.
33 Genette, *Paratexts*, 1.
34 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 21.
35 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 208.
36 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 54.
37 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 296.

Theatre, Croatia's Coldplay" or "Miki was from Mostar, a town ravaged in the war, the Stalingrad of Bosnia,"[38] for the reader previously unknown music bands and towns are made familiar by evoking a well-known Western band and the symbolically charged Second World War site of Stalingrad which is part of Western cultural memory rather than Mostar.

Trebinčević's experiences of the war extend long beyond it, because tensions and discrimination continue in the American diaspora,[39] since there are "10,000 expatriates in Queens" in the "Yugo Row,"[40] who come from different Yugoslavian areas. By explaining these tensions in the US, he provides important knowledge for the reader about his position as a migrant traumatised by war. A longer quotation sheds light on the narrative strategies to establish the "true story pact." At a night club, the tensions between migrants from Serbia and Bosnia escalate over symbolic gestures of nationalism and war, and in one instance the protagonist is provoked by a Serbian "three-finger salute"[41] when he reflects on the difference between his experiences and the perspective of his US "buddies":

> In my view it was like giving the 'Heil Hitler' sign to a Jewish Auschwitz survivor [. . .]. My college buddies argued that everyone was free to express their beliefs without consequences. But they had not been the victims of an ethnic-cleansing campaign by vicious racists who were barely punished. They were not obsessively following the news of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia led by a United Nations court of law, like my brother and I were. They didn't know that almost twenty years later the Serbs responsible for mass murder had yet to be prosecuted. [. . .] They didn't understand that the longer the trials went on, the more likely those responsible for the atrocities against my people would die in country-club prisons where they had access to TV, movies, music, and the Internet, and then be honoured with a hero's funeral in Serbia, like the reception given Slobodan Milošević when he died in 2006. They didn't realize that in an ex-Yugoslav social setting, one idiotic salute could provoke a nonviolent man whose entire life had been ripped away from him because of his religion.[42]

38 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 5.

39 See Halilovich whose study explores Bosnian translocal diasporic communities and regards diaspora as "a distinct form of collective identity of a deterritorialised group of people." Hariz Halilovich, *Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-local Identities in Bosnian War-torn Communities* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 5. She states that "[w]hile close to a million Bosnians were turned into internally displaced persons (IDPs), a further 1.3 million people became refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in many countries, predominantly in Europe, Northern America and Australia [. . .]." Halilovich, *Places*, 121.

40 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 4.

41 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 10.

42 Trebinčević, *Bosnia*, 11.

In this part, the main narrative devices consist of repetitions as well as a comparison specifically targeted at an American reader. The repetition of negations serves as an emphasis of the lack of knowledge of Trebinčević's American "college buddies." Negations such as "But they had not been," "They were not," "They didn't know," "They didn't understand" and "They didn't realize" are less focused on an incompatibility of experiences but rather on a lack of knowledge. Therefore, one major trajectory of this autobiography consists of providing this knowledge and thus a new understanding of war, politics and migratory experiences. In this, the text reveals itself as explicitly geared towards US readers by employing the comparisons of Yugoslavian politics with Hitler and Nazi Germany: Whereas this comparison would not work seamlessly in Germany, it hints at the fact that for a US audience this might constitute the only or the most powerful collective knowledge in order to explain genocide, displacement and diaspora. Drawing on this historical knowledge, the author attempts to make his own life and his experience with racism and genocide more relatable not only by conveying his unique and personal experience, but by evoking the specific historical events of Hitler and Nazi Germany as universal reference point for an American audience. In this way, he proposes a more universal reading of his unique experience. Hence, knowledge about the Yugoslav Wars is here created both by describing personal experiences and by resorting to historical knowledge which is activated by comparisons.

"They're looking for human interest stories": Communicating Knowledge of Migration and Creating Empathy for the Migrant from Sarajevo to New Zealand in Atka Reid's and Hana Schofield's *Goodbye Sarajevo: A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival* (2011)

Goodbye Sarajevo narrates the different stories of war and emigration of two sisters: While twelve-year-old Hana is put on one of the last UN evacuation buses leaving the besieged city of Sarajevo for Croatia in May 1992, Atka, her twenty-one-year-old sister, stays behind to care for their five younger siblings. When Atka finds work as a translator in a radio station, she meets Andrew, a journalist from New Zealand. They fall in love and as Atka becomes pregnant but also dangerously ill, she manages to migrate to New Zealand, eventually making it possible for her family to escape the war and migrate, too.

Several of the text's trajectories emerge when looking at the paratextual material. The subtitle "A True Story of Courage, Love and Survival" activates the "true story pact" from the beginning and hints at the more personal focus intertwined with the narration of political events that are presented as truthful. In the beginning, the readers are given a "Map of the former Yugoslavia" followed by a brief political explanation of the situation in 1991. The frame is also closed with an explanation: "[. . .] By the end of the war, upwards of 100,000 Bosnian people had been killed and over 1.8 million displaced by the conflict."[43] Hence, the sisters' personal story is framed by political facts. Compared to the map in *The Bosnia List*, which comprises the borders of Yugoslavia before and after the Yugoslav Wars and the 1995 Dayton Agreement as well as a smaller map which indicates Trebinčević's route of migration and thus tells a story by implying a temporal development, the "Map of former Yugoslavia" in *Goodbye Sarajevo* appears as static and definite information. Since only this map is given, it provides the only paratextual source of knowledge concerning Yugoslavia for Anglophone readers. The post-Yugoslav War reality is thus not represented, hence leaving the reader with only the knowledge of the country as it was in pre-war times. The two maps then convey different forms of knowledge of Yugoslavia: as either historically changing, as is the case in *The Bosnia List*, or as unchanging in *Goodbye Sarajevo*.

In this text, as in *The Bosnia List*, various media outlets not only provide the necessary information for the characters but at the same time for the readers; in Atka's situation in Sarajevo it is especially the radio: "'This is the Voice of America,' a deep voice announced and I pushed the 'record' button. I listened and, with a growing sense of bitter disappointment, wrote down the following: President Bush rejects a personal appeal from the President of Bosnia and Hercegovina to use military force against Serbian forces to end the Balkan war [. . .]."[44] Communicating information, the reference to the radio programme that Atka records – and with that in effect creates an archive of memory – simultaneously highlights the worldwide connections and political interdependence of Yugoslavia and the Anglophone West, here the US, as well as Europe.

The "true story pact" is activated in the text for instance when, as an eyewitness, Hana as a refugee in Croatia is asked about the war; here, the character's ignorance mirrors the readers':

> Petra asked me if the war in real life was the same as it looked on TV. "It's more scary," I replied. "I remember the first sirens when a couple of JNA jets flew low over the city. My friends and I thought it was so exciting to see jet planes that we ran up and down the street

43 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 337.
44 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 35.

> shouting, 'Top Gun, Tom Cruise.' But the next day the Serbs started shelling the old city and we could see our National Library burning in the distance."[45]

Hana's comparison of war in real life to war on TV affects the readers' conceptual schemes of representation. Her personal and emotional experience cannot compare to the news coverage as well as the material destruction. Nevertheless, the first point of reference for the children is fictional war movies, which underscores the basic inconceivability of war.

In terms of the connection between empathy and knowledge, the chapter entitled "The Interview" written by Atka in Sarajevo is pivotal: Here, the role of the media as well as the trajectory of the autobiography itself are thematised. Journalists play an important role in the book and the "true story pact" is activated explicitly: "'They're [the journalists] looking for human interest stories. I told them about your family,' she [an acquaintance] said, 'and how you and your grandma have ended up looking after your brothers and sisters because your mother can't get back home.'"[46] Only as a "human interest story," it is implied, does Atka's story affect the audience as truthful and moving. Reid and Schofield thematise the lack of knowledge that leads to ignorance and a lack of empathy, and at the same time they problematise media communication: "He [the journalist] told us that one of the difficulties the media faced was keeping the world interested after an entire year of fighting. It seemed that only very shocking reports were making the news these days."[47] In *Goodbye Sarajevo*, the communication of knowledge is presented as the prerequisite for empathy and "interest" in the migrants.

Such a communication of knowledge and the creation of migratory "contact zones" becomes especially salient once Atka has migrated to New Zealand. Much of her communication there as a mediator between cultures concerns the lack of knowledge about Bosnia. For instance, she talks to a travel agent in New Zealand: "'Oh, it's horrible to see what's happening over there. We're so far away here, it's hard for us to understand what all that fighting's about,' she said offering us a seat. Andrew started explaining to her the reason the war had started, but by the look on her face I could tell that she was completely confused."[48] The confusion and the claim that "it's hard for us to understand" not only reveal the geographical but also a mental distance between New Zealand and Bosnia.

45 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 44–45.
46 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 115.
47 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 261.
48 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 282.

Both sisters are repeatedly confronted with prejudices of Bosnia as an uncivilised country: "'Do you know much about Bosnia?' – 'Well, I imagined dirt roads and people living in huts. I didn't realise that this was such a modern country. You even have cable TV.' – Aida and I looked at each other and rolled our eyes. His comments were typical of foreigners who didn't know much about our country."[49] Such prejudices result from the Western world's lack of knowledge of and interest in Bosnia which is exposed by journalists as well as by Atka and Hana themselves in the book.

"I knew it was ignorance": The "True Story Pact" and the Communication of Knowledge in Fiction about Migration from Croatia to the US in Sara Nović's *Girl at War: A Novel* (2016)

When the Yugoslav Wars break out in 1991, the protagonist Ana Jurić in *Girl at War* is ten years old and lives in Zagreb. After her sister Rahela has become dangerously ill, Rahela is flown out to the US in order to receive life-saving medical treatment; for that, her parents have to give her up for adoption. Ana's parents are killed by Serb soldiers and Ana barely survives; hugely traumatised she reaches a village where she is taken in by resistance fighters and soon becomes a child soldier. After some time, an American association manages to fly her out and organise for her to be adopted by the same US family as her sister. In 2001, Ana, now a college student in Manhattan, is unable to escape her memories of war which she keeps secret. However, the events of 9/11 act as a signal for her that she has to come to terms with her war trauma and her experiences of migration, and thus she travels to Croatia.

The author Sara Nović explains in an interview that having been born in the US, she has never experienced the Yugoslav Wars. However, she witnessed the same lack of knowledge as Trebinčević and Reid/Schofield: "I was shocked to find that most of my peers didn't know where Croatia was, never mind what had happened there."[50] Hence, her novel begins with paratextual material that provides information and makes clear that literature also functions as an important medium

49 Reid and Schofield, *Sarajevo*, 130.

50 Sara Nović, "A Conversation Between Sara Nović and Julia Glass," in *Girl at War*, Sara Nović (New York: Random House, 2016), 325.

for gaining knowledge. The paratext begins with two literary quotations followed by two maps of "The Balkans, 1991" and "The Balkans, 2001," hence literature and political "fact" are already connected before the text starts. Through the maps, the contrast between the pre- and post-Yugoslav War time is emphasised even more than in *The Bosnia List*, where the changes caused by war are integrated in one map. Apart from that, these maps do not merely show Yugoslavia but the Balkans as a whole. This presentation of the Yugoslav Wars affecting a large region is further underscored by two very small maps that situate Yugoslavia in Europe. In this way, apart from indicating rapid political change which in turn emphasises the changeability of geographical knowledge, these maps provide knowledge concerning the situatedness of Yugoslavia in two larger contexts, namely the Balkans and Europe. The paratextual material also includes two quotes that establish intertextuality. The first is from Rebecca West's travelogue *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and the second from W. G. Sebald's essays on war and literature in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, since the protagonist reads West and Sebald in order to gain knowledge about Balkan history and her own story of war and displacement. In this epigraph, West's depiction of (Balkan) history is placed in the beginning:

> I had come to Yugoslavia to see what history meant in flesh and blood. I learned that it might follow, because an empire passed, that a world full of strong men and women and rich food and heady wine might nevertheless seem like a shadow-show: that a man of excellence might sit by a fire warming his hands in the vain hope of casting out a chill that lived not in the flesh. – Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon.* (n. pag.)[51]

History "in flesh and blood" reflects what the novel attempts to convey by the "true story pact," while West's quotation simultaneously refers to the "chill" of war influencing, in fact overshadowing, life. West's book reveals itself as showing the workings of war on and in the Balkans, while in *Girl at War* the influence of the Yugoslav Wars on the people of Yugoslavia is illustrated with Ana as a concrete case. Constantly providing instances of the connection of politics and literature, the text hence already combines both on a paratextual level. Like the previous two texts, *Girl at War* claims political truthfulness and activates the "true story pact," even though the subtitle should evoke the "fictional pact," since, as Depkat stresses, "[a]s a contrast [to autobiography], fictional literature invents plots, events, and characters and is characterised by representing its narrated worlds as if they were real, although they are not."[52]

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51 Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006), 103.

52 Depkat, "Facts," 280.

As is the case with the "Memoir" and the "True Story," this novel is a coming-of-age narrative in which the autodiegetic narrator grows up by gaining knowledge. Therefore, the readers have to follow the child's perspective. The questions she asks her parents furnish an effective vehicle for highlighting the central trajectory of the text: to enable the reader to gain an understanding of migration caused by the Yugoslav Wars. Ana asks her father who reads the newspaper with a map of Croatia: "'*Which* color are we again?' [. . .] 'Blue,' my father said. 'The Croatian National Guard. The police.' 'And the red ones?' '*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*. The JNA.' I didn't understand why the Yugoslav National Army would want to attack Croatia, which was full of Yugoslavian people [. . .]."[53] Her questions about the complex political situation are designed to echo the confusion of the reader. Nevertheless, her parents only constitute one source of knowledge while the media is shown to play a significant role again: "As a side effect of modern warfare, we had the peculiar privilege of watching the destruction of our country on television."[54] Being confronted with the war on TV means gaining a particularly significant source of information. The text offers a revaluation of the importance of TV which echoes the autobiographies' emphasis on the role of the media – and thus also of the texts themselves – for the communication of knowledge. However, time and again, this war, experienced directly and medially, is pitted against a child's perspective; for instance, Ana says that "War became our favourite game."[55]

Once she grows up and migrates, she becomes a mediator between cultures. In the attempt to talk about her experiences in the US, Ana quickly learns that the Americans' lack of knowledge is linked to the avoidance of issues as war, trauma and forced migration: "In America I'd learned quickly what it was okay to talk about and what I should keep to myself. 'It's terrible what happened there,' people would say when I let slip my home country and explained that it was the one next to Bosnia. They'd heard about Bosnia; the Olympics had been there in '84."[56] As a result, people either avoid listening or ask traumatising questions; in this context, the narrator states: "I knew it was ignorance, not insight that prompted these questions."[57]

In Ana's search for an understanding of her past and of her traumatising experiences of migration, books provide the most crucial insights by offering different kinds of knowledge: "Reading was one of the only ways in which I allowed

53 Nović, *Girl*, 19.
54 Nović, *Girl*, 27.
55 Nović, *Girl*, 50.
56 Nović, *Girl*, 99.
57 Nović, *Girl*, 100.

myself to think about the continent and country I'd left behind. Though I hadn't told the professor anything about myself, he seemed to know I was not at home in the world, and so he lent me books – Kundera and Conrad and Levy and a host of other displaced persons."[58] While such books thus offer her an understanding of displacement, exile and trauma, Rebecca West provides an insight into Yugoslav history and mentality. Ana types "Croatia" into the library catalogue database at university: "I pulled the biggest nonreference book – *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* – from its place on the shelf and thumbed through the first few pages in the volume of over a thousand."[59] When Ana travels back to Croatia, she even takes West's book as a guide[60] thus indicating that literature can indeed create knowledge: Here, imagining and knowing migration are intricately intertwined. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Rebecca West attempts to experience, explore, understand and to mediate the Balkans to British readers. Combining hybrid generic elements such as travelogue, autobiography, historiography, political writing and allegory in her text, West not only communicates knowledge about the Balkans from very different angles, but she also searches for her own narrative identity. In *Girl at War*, at one point Ana desperately states that "I still had no narrative to make sense of what had happened"[61] and the literary narratives offer the possibility to find her own narrative and her identity between cultures. Hence, the intertextual reference to West's text on a paratextual as well as textual level reveals similar trajectories of both texts. As fiction, *Girl at War* activates the "true story pact" while presenting different sources of knowledge about war and migration as equally valid, be they "factual" or fictional.

Conclusion: The "True Story Pact" in Autobiography and in the Novel of Migration

With Trebinčević's and Reid/Schofield's autobiographies and Nović's novel, English-speaking texts as literature of migration gain a new significance as "world literature," a literature that does not belong to one national literature only. Such texts do not share the fate of so-called "minor literature"[62] by being available for

58 Nović, *Girl*, 118.
59 Nović, *Girl*, 162.
60 Nović, *Girl*, 172.
61 Nović, *Girl*, 100–101.
62 Compare Obradović who poses the question of centre and margin along the lines of language: "Will literatures of minor languages and minor cultures always be considered national literatures?"

a larger audience – an audience, however, which is in need of information. By activating the "true story pact," they emphasise that knowing about migration, its causes, experiences, processes, forms the basis for the readers' empathy and understanding.

Autobiography and novel about migration might appear as fundamentally different genres, since, as Müller-Funk writes, "[m]edia can be understood as the variety of forms which do not simply represent the content of the narratives but also serve to construct them in different ways."[63] However, it has been argued that, instead of activating either the "autobiographical pact" or the "fictional pact," the generic differences retreat to the background, since the communication of knowledge acquires primary importance. Hence, the "true story pact" is activated first by similar strategies in both autobiography and novel.

Writing about the Yugoslav Wars for an Anglophone audience presents difficulties since the war did not reach public consciousness globally. Analysing these texts draws attention to the globalising effects of wars and migration for literature in general. Here, the similarities to more current wars, such as the war in Syria, become palpable, although media coverage exhibits significant differences compared to the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s. The near future will present us with more "true stories" communicating knowledge of migration particularly for readers in English as a global language, because questions of how to represent migrants are particularly salient in the contemporary political context in which an estimated 82.4 million people in the world are forcibly displaced.[64]

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63 Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "On a Narratology of Cultural and Collective Memory," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 33.2 (2003): 208.

64 Compare the date provided by the UN Refugee Agency: UNHCR, https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html, Figures at a Glance (18 February 2022).

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Olumide Popoola

Chapter 11
You Can't Breathe Water

We were waiting. For a reaction. When we, hundreds of us, were drowning at sea. We trailed through the timelines, we listened in on conversations and checked for newly founded WhatsApp groups to 'finally do something'. We were waiting, no, hoping, for a voice rising against, for something, a little empathy.

You can't breathe water.

You can't announce your drowning.

If someone is trying to record, documenting our demise up close, they too will end up amongst the fishes and algae. Dead. And you know fully well that mobiles don't operate well under water. Not the ones we are carrying.

The sea holds so much unspeakable. Even we cannot speak to it, in its entirety.

> Drowning tends to be a quiet, silent act. Victims do not usually thrash. Instead they expend significant energy trying to keep their head above water and may be too tired to shout for help; moreover, if water comes into contact with the vocal cords, they can go into spasm and prevent the victim from shouting for help. Often, the victim is found floating or at the bottom of the body of water . . .[1]

Of course, shouting is a tricky thing when the one we might be shouting for is determined not to hear you. When boats and dinghies are driven away from your shores, prevented from making it to the mainland. Futile to shout for you.

We know you are tired. Tired of the groups of people arriving, us, people like us. We arrive needy and unconnected. You are called for, your humanity is questioned because you don't want to share what you have. You need what you have. We understand. Most of us are like that, concerned with ourself/ves.

It was just, while we were not thrashing, and we could not shout and we were experiencing spasms that we thought but Britain? That same country leaving the EU? The ones who wanted their country back and we were still debating what that could possibly mean?

You were never the ones carrying us. Not in any real significant numbers.

Do you remember, a few years back, when the summer lull was invigorated with endless news items of us arriving? Groups of us trying to reach mainland

1 Benjamin Wedro, "Drowning (Dry, Wet, Near)," https://www.medicinenet.com/drowning/article.htm, *MedicineNet* (13 February 2023).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-011

Europe, or docking on islands, although docking does not quite describe it. More often it was a messy scramble, us setting foot on solid ground drenched and scared, some of us with children in our arms. Remember? We enlivened the slow summer with running for trains or trying to jump onto lorries in Calais to make it across the channel. To you.

> "[. . .] Black people, become the *carriers* of terror, terror's embodiment [. . .] the ground of terror's possibility globally."[2]

We wanted you.

We decided it had to be two things that were responsible for the constant replay of us running. Either there was no other news to frighten the population with, and we understand that fear is always good to keep alive. How better to rule over people than when they are scared? The other possibility is that you were passing laws, doing things that you did not want an audience for and we were useful in that manner, helpers you might say. A veil between your people and yourself. That too is valid and although a common trick, we understand that you would not want to change what's been tried and tested.

> [. . .] those Black people transmigrating the African continent toward the Mediterranean and then to Europe who are imagined as insects, swarms, vectors of disease; familiar narratives of danger and disaster that attach to our always already weaponized Black bodies (the weapon is blackness).[3]

We *were* a dramatic picture. Even we have to admit that. Like that, in that loop of an edited image and video stream: the invasion of the invader.

Yet, some people still pretend time is not circular? This is the most full-circle you will ever get. Well, we think there might be more to come now that you have your country back, of course. Finally, it is you only. By yourself. Just like you wanted.

Your home secretary is concerned, very much so, that we should stay on the French side of the channel. She praised the drones, the radar, all the technology you have for surveillance. The police. All the efforts to keep us out. This time you don't see us running, not on the Newsnight videos. It's the odd picture of us, defiant, still on boats, still trying to come. To you. But this is not where our stories are. Hardly. You know that fully well.

It takes a full sixty seconds for an adult to drown? Twenty seconds for a child. It's quick, no time to make an argument. You exist, you've capsized, you

2 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 15. Emphasis in the original.

3 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 15–16.

drown. Or should we say, we, for clarity? *We* drown so much that a spokesperson for Alarm Phone, a hotline for migrants in distress, says "this is a massacre at Europe's borders."[4]

Someone from the medical team of the NGO Italian Emergency, on-board the only rescue boat operating in the Central Mediterranean Open Arms, said:

> "All this [. . .] a few kilometres away from an indifferent Europe [. . .] they instead continue to bury their heads in the sand, pretending not to see the cemetery that the Mediterranean Sea has become."[5]

We are thinking of time. Time passing, time arriving, time repeating itself. Is this too abstract?

Do you know that Sahé Sephore was the first undocumented migrant who was buried formally with both their name and surname on a tombstone in the Canaries?[6] There is a picture of her on that tombstone. Her cheeks are round and yummy and everyone wants to play with her because we just know she was cheeky, in that good sense of the word. She was 13 months old when she drowned near the Coast of Gran Canary in May 2019. We mourn, we hold her. In our arms below sea level. It is important to have a name. Hers is there now, in writing. Still, when we search for her we can't find anything online, other than the one news item that includes her tombstone with a photo. You don't give us much space. Outside of the videos and pictures you like.

There is another name that echoed prominently for us. Again, not on your land, not even on your shores. But we think it might all be connected, just like time. His name is Mohamed Hasan and he was 12. He never made it onto the boats. He didn't make it out of Egypt where he was one of many Sudanese refugees. He was stabbed to death by an Egyptian man. The peaceful protests that followed, crying out for justice for him, demanding an end to violence and discrimination, were dispersed violently by the state. Officers hurling racial and xenophobic slurs while arresting protestors.[7]

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4 Lorenzo Tondo, "More than 110 migrants die in Mediterranean in three days," https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/12/bodies-of-74-migrants-wash-up-on-libyan-beach, *The Guardian*, 12 November 2020 (13 February 2023).

5 Tondo, "More than 110 migrants die in Mediterranean in three days."

6 Guy Hedgecoe, "Europe migrant crisis: Ten days of Atlantic peril in search of Spain," https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-55143046, *BBC*, 2 December 2020 (13 February 2023).

7 Zeinab Mohammed Salih, "Dozens of Sudanese migrants held in Cairo after protests," https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/12/dozens-of-sudanese-migrants-held-in-cairo-after-protests, *The Guardian*, 12 November 2020 (13 February 2023).

And here it is, what we think you might understand. The link. The voices that don't like us, that have so much to say, some of what is said is prosecutable because it would fall under a hate crime. The names they call us are not ours. They are often not even acceptable under the law. This is the same. Not the law, but the name-calling, changing us into something else. The way we are no longer persons but a mass of a problem that can be discarded. There, here, we mean, in your places and their places. We are of course not with you, neither here nor there. We are hovering in the water, not quite sinking because we have stories to tell, names to call. We have some urgent matters to take up with you.

For one, we are concerned with the children. Especially now that you and your country are all by yourself, without the baggage that is the EU and its laws. There seem to be some inconsistencies with your prime minister's promises to have our unaccompanied minors reunited with their families in the UK. And those children who don't have families in your country but who are alone, unaccompanied, nevertheless. He promised he would receive them. Well, not receive them personally. We cannot expect that. We don't. We are not unreasonable or delusional. We did have visions for the future but they don't go that far.

The prime minister said that you leaving, you getting your big wish, would not affect our children. Those alone. They would still be able to come, even after you have left the EU. Yet, we hear there are issues and if not resolved there are quite a few children and families who would be refused entry. To your land. The island. Not the one near us, your island further north. We appreciate it if you can take the time to address this. Urgently, we want to say, but we know we don't have anything to bargain with.

We are ready to speak about the future. We are wondering what yours will become.

Will you be happy now? You will set your own quotas and the brilliant surveillance equipment that the home secretary is so fond of will surely help at the last hurdle. If any of us should still make it as close as the French side of the channel. And you know we will. We still believe in you. For a while at least. Perhaps you will be surprised if you are not invited to countries anymore by needing a visa at some point. But it won't keep you out, we know that. Why would it? You wanted your country back. You never said you didn't want to go anywhere. That is different.

There are a few secrets we don't speak much about. We too want our countries back. Real ones. We won't bore you with all that just now. We have been taking up too much of your time already.

The future we said. What is there to come? We have told you about our hopes and dreams. Several times. Some of those dreams were tied up with us

coming to you, trying at least. What are yours? Just in case the big one, sovereignty, ends up a bit similar to ours. With the fishes.

Let us know. You know where to find us.

We are not going anywhere.

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Section C: **Performing Migration**

Ananya Jahanara Kabir

Chapter 12
Archive-Repertoires of Memory: Knowing Migration Through Shailesh Bahoran's Dance

In this essay I write about an artist, a hiphop dancer and choreographer, Shailesh Bahoran, who is Dutch of Hindustani-Surinamese heritage. I use Bahoran's work in several ways: to interrogate the relationship between "archive" and "repertoire;" to ask what it means to know through remembering, and to remember through dancing; and to explore what is it that we might want to "know" about migration. But I also use its multivalent appeal to the researcher in me to lever into the space of research, often buried aspects of subjectivity and positionality. I write about Bahoran not just to ask objective questions about epistemology, migration and movement, but to place on the table what it means for someone like me to write about someone like him. By "like me," I indicate a position of relative privilege earned through my education in elite institutions of the world ringfenced by certain conditions that have shadowed those privileges: racialisation in Europe (the space of my work); minoritisation through religious affilation in India (the nation of my birth and citizenship); restrictions on mobility thanks to decisions to retain that citizenship; gender. By "like him," I indicate a male-identifying person racialised in the Europe that he is a citizen of; a person shaped by multiple generations of un/free migration across empires, oceans, continents and nations; born in a highly ethnically diverse country whose DNA is nevertheless "100% South Asian,"[1] and who expresses himself through a dance style forged from African American struggles for dignity, pride and self-expression.

Between that "me" and this "him," there is a vast gulf that opened out when his ancestors left British India from the city I was born in. Yet despite that gulf, our life paths intersected at a common point of interest – African-heritage dance repertoires. This essay calibrates that gulf but also indicates the ways in which it can generate awareness of what Lisa Lowe has called "the intimacies of four continents."[2] In spite of all that which separates, the contingent emerges through its

1 The results of his DNA test were shared by Shailesh Bahoran with me in a personal communication. For this, as well as so much else he has shared with me over the past decade, I am deeply grateful to Shailesh.

2 Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-012

Latin etymology of "touching with." How do we detect those intimacies that exist beneath the radar of plotted narratives and charted routes? Lowe wants to "make legible the forcible encounters, removals, and entanglements omitted in liberal accounts of abolition, emancipation and independence" by "devis[ing] other ways of reading so that we might understand the processes through which the forgetting of violent encounter is naturalized, both by the archive, and in the subsequent narrative histories."[3] My contribution to this approach is to seek intimacies of articulation – where "to articulate" is taken back to the movement of our joints. In the dance some other embodied histories are activated. My essay works through the articulations and contingencies that suture histories of migration to histories of staying put, and that come full circle when generations later those who inherit those histories come into contact in a continent other than those of our births, through the kinetic vocabularies of those who migrated out from yet another continent through the connected oceans.

I once found myself in Paramaribo, Suriname. What took me there was a conference on the legacies of Indian indentured labour worldwide.[4] But even more of a learning experience was simply being in a space that, prior to that moment, I had barely registered as a geographical and cultural entity: the Dutch Caribbean.[5] Moreover, I was in a part thereof that was not an island in the Caribbean Sea, but a sliver of land poised on the northern edge of South America, yoked to and different from French Guyane and English-speaking Guyana. Suriname looks out across the ocean towards Africa and Asia; northwards to the sugar plantation islands of the Caribbean, and backwards to the vastness of Amazonia; it is populated by a complex mix of ethnicities speaking a multitude of languages. In this space haunted by overlapping imperial histories, I heard echoes of words, accents and intonations that informed my own multilingual postcolonial world. My tongue encountered food that triggered my memory more acutely than sounds ever could. I was introduced to people whose faces and names reminded me sharply of my personal history in the port city of Calcutta, the culture of my family overlapping with that of the Biharis who had once set sail for Suriname via that city's docks. Together with

3 Lowe, *Four Continents*, 2–3.

4 For the proceedings of the conference, see Maurits S. Hassankhan, Lomarsh Roopnarine, Cheryl White and Radica Mahase, eds., *Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour: Historical and Contemporary Issues in Suriname and the Caribbean* (Suriname: Routledge, 2016).

5 On the Dutch Caribbean, see Gert J. Oostindie, *Paradise Overseas: The Dutch Caribbean: Colonialism and its Transatlantic Legacies* (Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2005); Francio Guadeloupe, *Chanting Down the New Jerusalem: Calypso, Christianity, and Capitalism in the Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); on Suriname's place both within "the three Guianas" and the Dutch Caribbean, see Rosemarijn Hoefte, Matthew L. Bishop and Peter Clegg, eds., *Post-Colonial Trajectories in the Caribbean: The Three Guianas* (London: Routledge, 2017).

Surinamese people of African ancestry, I danced to a live performance of a much-beloved song for the Sufi saint of travellers, Jhulelal, whose shrine is now in Sindh, Pakistan.[6]

Before visiting Suriname, I had already experienced similar cultural phenomena in Trinidad, at another conference on Indian indentured labour.[7] There, somehow, the connecting tissue of a shared past – that of the British Empire – had made the matter less strange than the encounter with this remnant of another empire. Out here in Paramaribo, embedded in a matrix of spelling, language, aesthetics and architecture specific to the Netherlands and its colonies,[8] and, therefore, unfamiliar to me, were fragments of my own history, like the tips of vast icebergs in an unknown sea. These fragments linked up even more unexpectedly with the research interest that had propelled me to Suriname – the popular music and dance forms of the Caribbean which formed the basis of an interdisciplinary project on the possibilities of transnational solidarities forged through kinesis and rhythm.[9] In Paramaribo, dancing to zouk music in a room that was advertised as a salsa club, with Indian-looking young adults moving enthusiastically to r-n-b and hiphop in an adjoining room, I felt ever more displaced and ever more connected. My body felt porous to different waves of history. Where were the textbooks, the novels, even the atlases, that would help me analyse these assemblages created from migrations, displacements and deracinations?

Pagal Samandar/ Mad Sea

Sunny afternoon outside, darkness inside. Out of the dark emerge footsteps and the faint outline of bodies. Slowly, six sitting bodies are revealed. An Indian soundscape – tablas, Sanskrit chants – makes itself audible. A South Asian sacred

6 On the Sufi saint Jhulelal, see Dominique-Sila Khan, "Jhulelal and the Identity of Indian Sindhis," in *Sindh through History and Representations: French Contributions to Sindhi Studies*, ed. Michel Boivin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 72–81.

7 See the proceedings of this conference in Maurits S. Hassankhan, Lomarsh Roopnarine and Hans Ramsoedh, eds., *The Legacy of Indian Indenture: Historical and Contemporary aspects of Migration and Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2016).

8 On some of these complications around competing imperial scripts for Indic languages, and their repercussions beyond peninsular India, see Sonia N. Das, "Failed Legacies of Colonial Linguistics: Lessons from Tamil Books in French India and French Guiana," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 59.4 (2017): 846–883.

9 See Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Oceans, Cities, Islands: Sites and Routes of Afro–Diasporic Rhythm Cultures," *Atlantic Studies* 11.1 (2014): 106–124.

ambience is unfolded through hand gestures. We are in a meditative memorial space. The bodies rise, writhing around a central, box-like frame. They wear short kurtas and dhotis of white homespun cotton – the signature garb of South Asian migrant labour down the ages. Beneath, they wear black stretch tops and leggings – the uniform of contemporary dancers. We are in world as layered as their clothing. Here, bodies, space, sound and movement bear witness to migration and mixing, to the subaltern's labour that laid the bricks of modernity. This is the history commemorated in the magnificent dance piece, *Lalla Rookh*. I was watching it at the Korzo Theatre, The Hague, where it had premiered in February 2014 as part of the Dutch Kadans Festival. It was also the first time I met the director of *Lalla Rookh*, the Dutch hiphop dancer and choreographer Shailesh Bahoran, who was born in Suriname, is of Indian heritage, and has lived in the Netherlands since his childhood.[10]

"Lalla Rookh" was the ship that transported the first Hindustani migrants from colonial India to Suriname – three hundred and ninety-nine of them who alighted at Fort Nieuw Amsterdam on 5 June 1873. They came to fill the labour gap left after the abolition of slavery in 1863; c. 30,000 more would follow.[11] Bahoran and three of *Lalla Rookh*'s cast of six claim this history as that of their ancestors, but this history is equally owned by the other three dancers who are of Moroccan and Indonesian heritage.[12] And indeed, *Lalla Rookh* leaves its audience with the realisation that all of us, subjects of capitalist modernity, are also part of that history. This inclusiveness is enabled by hiphop.[13] Afro-diasporic dance heritage tells the story of the *pagal samundar*: Hindustani for the "mad sea" that the ships encountered as they turned the Cape of Good Hope. The ship tossed on high waves, the dislocation of a body and mind in extreme agony, incapacitation, dementia: we saw it all on stage. The battle steps of capoeira, forged through resistance on the plantation, now enacted the emergence of the bond of *jahaji-bhai*.[14] Urban dance evoked the complete transformation of the new arrival to *girmitiya*: the subject of empire

10 For Bahoran's biography, see "Shailesh Bahoran," https://www.ircompany.nl/about/shailesh, *Illusionary Rockaz Company* (13 February 2023).

11 See Rosemarijn Hoefte, "Control and Resistance: Indentured Labor in Suriname," *New West Indian Guide/ Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 61.1/2 (1987):1–22.

12 I obtained these details during discussions with the *Lalla Rookh* dancers during their performance at Wellesley College, Boston, on 9 November 2017.

13 Thomas F. DeFrantz, "The Black Beat made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power," in *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*, ed. André Lepecki (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 64–81.

14 See, for instance, Matthias Röhrig Assunção, *Capoeira: The History of an Afro–Brazilian Martial Art* (London: Routledge, 2004). For some complicating elaborations of the terms *jahaji–bhai* and *jahaji–behen* (ship-brother and ship-sister), see Rhoda Reddock, "Jahaji Bhai: The Emergence of a Dougla Poetics in Trinidad and Tobago," *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power* 5.4

whose body is worth the labour it delivers, measurable in years, months, days and hours.[15] These are the robots of the Plantation and the Factory, the zombies of the Caribbean, the cogs in Capitalism's monstrous wheels.[16]

Periodically, melodies and chanting voices revive a sense of the sacred. An existential problem emerges: How do we heal through these fragments? Can the trauma of *Lalla Rookh* and *kala pani* – the dark passage that robbed one of identity and moorings – ever recede?[17] Though identities are lost, the dance somehow suggests that newness is born – without amnesia. This is why a New World dance vocabulary, forged through the embodied memory of those who had been displaced earlier by enslavement, makes poetic sense here. *Lalla Rookh*'s dancers move from the particular to the universal through a versatile set of urban or street styles that are integral elements within African American social dance as a resistance to the Plantation's necropolitics: hiphop, b-boying, breakdancing, funk, popping, locking.[18] Yet an Indian-ness is also invoked, especially through the little traditions that *Lalla Rookh* lovingly memorialises, in ritual gestures of meditation, consecration and prayer that start and end the piece. A new creolised body, with Indian hand mudras and b-boying lower bodies, is brought into being through dance. It moves in counterpoint to the relentless metronome of Capitalist time; it responds to the notes of the wooden flute that reminds us of the god Krishna, whose attribute the flute is, carrying the essence of Indic sweetness across the mad seas.[19]

(1999): 569–601; and Sean Lokaisingh–Meighoo, "Jahaji Bhai: Notes on the Masculine Subject and Homoerotic Subtext of Indo–Caribbean Identity," *Small Axe* 7 (2000): 77–92.

15 The English word "agreement," which is what the would-be labourer signed to enter indenture, became "girmit" in Indian languages, while "girmitiya" was the person who entered that agreement. The term was particularly prevalent in Fiji but is now being used in a broader, pan–diasporic sense. See Brij V. Lal, "Girmit," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 40.2 (2017): 313–315; and Sudesh Mishra, "Time and Girmit," *Social Text* 82 (2005): 15–36.

16 On the connections between zombies and extractive capitalism (in the widest sense of the term), see Sascha Morrell, "Zombies, Robots, Race, and Modern Labour," *Affirmations: of the Modern* 2.2 (2015): 101–34; and Michael W. Merriam, "'Haitian is my Language:' A Conversation with Frankétienne," *World Literature Today* 89.2 (2015): 22–25.

17 On the term *kala pani* (Hindustani, "black waters") and its literary repercussions, see Brinda J. Mehta, *Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo–Caribbean Women writers Negotiate the Kala Pani* (University of West Indies Press, 2004).

18 For details on these substyles and their relationship to hiphop dance, see Mark Anthony Neal and Murray Forman, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip–Hop Studies Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004). On necropolitics, see Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

19 On the emotional freight of Krishna and his attributes in the labour diasporic context, see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Beyond Créolité and Coolitude, the Indian on the Plantation Re–creolization in the Transoceanic Frame," *Middle Atlantic Review of Latin American Studies* 4.2 (2020): 174–193,

Dance: To Remember, to Forget, to know

I have used my experience of viewing, analysing and learning from *Lalla Rookh* as an entry point to my essay. We are in a postcolonial moment replete with unpredictable trajectories of movement and affiliation. Transnationalism and cyber-connectivity bring us face to face with realities and histories entangled with ours in ways not always graspable in earlier phases of modernity. Gaps in our intellection open up which our established heuristic tools cannot immediately close. *Lalla Rookh* exemplifies for me how multi-sensory, embodied and performative resources can work in these contexts. The interlocking phenomenologies of dance, theatre and sound convey what Michael Rothberg has called our "implication" in each other's traumas, far more efficaciously than any written document can.[20] Memories of journeys, both unspoken and impossible to articulate, become expressible through another kind of articulation – the movement of the joints of the body.[21] Working with dance implies shifting one's critical practice from the realm of the graphic to the kinetic, from the textual and the recorded, to the embodied and ephemeral. Dance throws at me, a literary critic by training, the challenge of moving between textual and non-textual forms of creative expression. Before coming to dance, I had already enlarged my repertoire of primary materials from the written text to cinema, the visual and plastic arts and music. But working with dance allowed me to embrace fully the epistemological invitation of the protean, moving body. The body that traces history and inscribes its being in air and space returns us with new urgency to the question of theorising postcolonial memorialising and forgetting.

This body as repository of memory cannot be explicated solely through theory founded on forms of narrative expression and textual inscription, but neither can those theories be bracketed off from the body. Rather, the archive as repository of records, and the body's creative expressivity demand analysis as dialogic epistemologies, sometimes complementary, sometimes antagonistic. From Diana Taylor's distinction between "archive" and "repertoire" I thus extract a composite concept, "archive-repertoire," as signalled in the title of my essay.[22] Furthermore, "repertoire" for me is also "sensorium." The olfactory, the palpable, the kinetic:

here 177–179. It should be noted too that "Kishan" (Hindustani / Bhojpuri form of "Krishna") is the name of Bahoran's latest solo dance piece, dedicated to his son (who is also called Kishan): see "Dans op donderdag | Shailesh Bahoran / KISHAN," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKKA4Mjt3Zg, Zwolse theaters, *Youtube*, 28 January 2022 (13 February 2023).

20 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

21 Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), especially chapter 1, "Samba: The Body Articulate," 1–34.

22 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

these are the ineffable, impermanent dimensions of memorialising that the sensorium gathers together as we work through historical trauma to claim our places within the narrative of modernity. The dancing body as episteme, the sensorium as knowledge-transmitter and the archive-repertoire as expressive code: all shed new light on the persistent question of how societies, and individuals within societies, remember, forget and forge solidarities in the wake of large-scale traumatic events. Thus, Shailesh Bahoran's embodied articulation of Atlantic and Indian Ocean histories pushed my own research questions around memory studies beyond their territorialised preoccupations with the traumas of and around the Partition of India and the remainder of Kashmir towards a new, transoceanic remit for South Asia.[23] The journey of his ancestors outwards from Calcutta, on a ship like the *Lalla Rookh*, urged me to rethink my obsession with "cracks on the ground," with "cracking India."[24] As I become increasingly aware of my relationship to the ocean, via the Bay of Bengal and the port of Calcutta, I have started asking: how do memories of those who stay intersect with memories of those who had to leave?

The shift of focus provided another important corrective. For a long time, as a scholar, and like a great many people I know, I was largely interested in memory as it related to the study of unhappy affects. Mourning, melancholia and trauma were my buzzwords, and I was committed to working out ways to understand our postcolonial existence through them. This was a respectable exercise. The postcolonial world was a mess. 9/11 had happened, Islamophobia and radical Islam were both on the rise, while in India the Hindu Right had started its journey towards total supremacy. Ethnic conflicts were getting a new lease of life by being calqued on to one or the other of available religious revivalisms. On the ecological front, the 2000s brought various natural disasters – earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and the ever-present issue of global warming that, even when ostensibly unprovoked by human intervention, always confirmed the weakness of public infrastructure and the strength of corruption, especially in the developing world. There seemed

23 See, for instance, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "*Rapsodia Ibero-Indiana*: Transoceanic Creolization and the Mando of Goa," *Modern Asian Studies* 55.5 (2021): 1581–1636; and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Creole Indias, Creolizing Pondicherry: Ari Gautier's *Le thinnai* as the Archipelago of Fragments," *Comparative Literature* 74.2 (2022): 202–218.

24 The allusions are to the title of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1988), and to the engagement with "cracks on the ground" and the cracking body of the narrator in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981); for my engagement with this metaphor of cracking in these two classic works of Partition Literature in English, see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Subjectivities, Memories, Loss: of Pigskin Bags, Silver Spittoons and the Partition of India," *Interventions* 4.2 (2002): 245–264; and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Gender, Memory, Trauma: Women's Novels on the Partition of India," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25.1 (2005): 177–190.

little to be happy about, and devoting oneself to finding and developing analytical models for the trauma of postcolonial subjects seemed the most responsible task at hand. There were several scholarly role models to emulate, especially in the field of Holocaust Studies, and I set myself to developing paradigms for South Asian postcolonial memory politics through absorbing and dialoguing with those paradigms. Two decades-worth of research and writing on South Asia's traumas and conflicts, including conflicts between public and variously private cultures of memorialisation, was the result.[25]

I had become a scholar of South Asian memory-making who emphasised trauma's ubiquity as a postcolonial condition, and who took her cue from predominantly negative affects in both creative and intellectual domains. Supreme amongst these was Freudian melancholia and its post-Freudian elaborations.[26] Increasingly wanting to mould these resources and approaches to specific cultural contexts, I worked with South Asian affect clusters around language and image-worlds constellated around competing print cultures inherited from the late colonial period, and the splintered yet reticulated vernacular and Anglophone modernities that resulted. Affects of longing caused by separation, distilled in words such as the Sanskrit-derived "viraha" or Siraiki "moonjh" became useful lens to apply alongside the Eurocentric paradigms diffused throughout the postcolonial world.[27] But, fairly traumatised myself by repeated research visits to a live conflict zone (Indian Kashmir) and by analytical returns to the history of my own family divided by Partition, I was driven to look to a very different field of enquiry – Latin America. Spurred on by vague ideas of comparatively studying global postcolonialisms in a South-South model, I started to learn Spanish. This move led me to the world of Latin dance; the genealogies of those dance forms, in turn, led me to the African heritage of embodied and performance culture in and from the Americas.[28] The Afromodern dance floor and the dancing body that was at home in that space began opening new pathways for my quest to know, feel

25 My first published article on the topic was Kabir, "Subjectivities, Memories, Loss;" this phase of my research career culminated in two monographs, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2009); and *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971, and Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2013).

26 See Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), and the work of Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok.

27 I have discussed these words in more detail in Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Affect, Body, Place: Trauma Theory in the World," in *The Future of Trauma Theory*, eds. Samuel Durrant and Stef Craps (London: Routledge 2013), 63–75.

28 Kabir, "Affect, Body, Place" records the start of this journey.

and articulate our modern condition: the traumas and the healing processes, alike, which make "implicated subjects" of us all.[29]

Alegria: A Radical Route to Knowing Migration

Diaspora is frequently experienced, remembered and analysed in terms of trauma, and, on the face of it, there is every reason to do so. The causes of diasporic migrations range from economic deprivation to political upheaveal, and from deceitful enticements – as in the case of indentured labour diasporas – to coercion, violence and the theft of populations to convert them into commodities – as in the case of enslavement. Even if a diasporic migration had been voluntary, there is always a formative input of homesickness or nostalgia. This close and foundational connection to traumatic events opens the migrant condition to reflections on the divergence between official histories and private traumas, the movement of the latter into "cultural trauma" and "collective trauma," and the intergenerational transmission of traumatic memory as "postmemory" or "post-amnesia." Textual explorations of diasporic subjectivity, such as the poem and the novel, fit well with modern literary preoccupations with alienation, unhomeliness, fragmentation of subjectivity, melancholia, which dovetail with the theoretical preoccupations with negative affects that I have noted above. The diasporic migrant writer, conscious of the slippage between origin, belonging and location, is well placed to answer the questions that have vivified modern literature: who am I, and where have I come from? But there is another side to culture produced through displacement: the transformation of those traumatic experiences into modes of resilience, survival and even joy. Where are the paradigms through which we can showcase and explicate this transformation? It is in music and dance forged through the experience and memory of the Plantation that I found answers.

I identify a positive affect generated by such music and dance working in conjunction with each other, that I call *alegria*, a pan-Iberian world for happiness or joy, connotative of a physicality that sometimes evades its English equivalents. Alegria is felt in the body. Its transformative force is most apparent in sonic and kinetic responses to the relationship between labour and diaspora, founded on the institution of slavery and perpetuated by the precariousness of post-Abolition life and labour migrations. Song lyrics alert us often to this paradox by explicitly

29 For an elaboration of these possibilities, see, for instance, Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Decolonizing Time through Dance with Kwenda Lima: Cabo Verde, Creolization, and Affiliative Afromodernity," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31.3 (2019): 318–333.

juxtaposing traumatic memories of the Plantation with assertions of the joy generated by dancing to those songs. Thus, salsa songs on cane-cutting in Cuba, such as 'Tumba la caña,' funaná songs on working the volcanic Capeverdean soil, such as 'Djonsinho Cabral,' sega songs from Mauritius that evolved from the feminine labour of cooking, such as 'Mol mole': these are just some examples of how music created out of migration and diaspora can transform the soundtrack of everyday life into the celebration of labour as a burden and self-making practice. The transformation of labour into alegria is further facilitated through dance. Rhythm and melody, call and response, and other structuring features that once ensured coordinated movement on the plantation, the field and the assembly line, now do so on the dance floor. Dance provides an embodied counterpoint to the memories of labour articulated in lyrics, converting potentially negative affect generated by those memories into an exhilaration that connects mind and body, individual and crowd.

A performance such as *Lalla Rookh* takes to the stage the dance and music of the street, to shine a spotlight on that exhilaration and make us, in the audience, sit up and feel it in our bodies. *Lalla Rookh* doesn't just call on us to feel sorrow, remorse and anger for the brutalities of forced or coerced migration across the mad seas to serve the cause of extractive capitalism. The kinetic virtuosity of the dancing bodies on stage, their ability to interpret the music and rhythm, demand equally from us an appreciation of human agility to not merely survive, but survive with agility, grace and creativity. In watching, we vicariously feel their movements in our own bodies; through "kinaesthetic empathy,"[30] we understand that trauma was not always followed by melancholia. Rather, there are multifarious ways of re-making the self and the collective after trauma that involve repetition, physicality and the body. What I am calling an alegropolitics of dance thus demands theory's return to a physical dimension of happiness that exceeds, indeed, by-passes the sexual in favour of the communal. Casting aside the age-old scholarly suspicion of happiness as a mere promise that was yet another kind of opium of the deluded masses, and of optimism as cruel in its delusions, I propose instead that we take alegria seriously.[31] How does the call to remember or forget sit alongside the imperative to be happy? How is happiness related to pleasure? Can we brush aside positive affects in our studies of memory? *Alegropolitics*,

30 Jaana Parviainen, "Kinaesthetic Empathy," *Dialogue and Universalism* 13.11–12 (2003): 151–162.
31 I allude here to Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); and Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); for my critique of these and other approaches to happiness see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "On Postcolonial Happiness," in *The Postcolonial World*, eds. Jyotsna G. Singh and David D. Kim (London: Routledge 2016), 35–52.

coined in dialogic response to Achille Mbembe's "necropolitics,"[32] is a heuristic toolkit with which to approach such questions.

The postcolonial condition has been over-intellectualised, as Elizabeth Freeman observes, through the intelligentsia's propensity to turn away from a "seemingly obsolete politics of pleasure" and "[acquiesce] [. . .] to a Protestant ethic in which pleasure cannot be the grounds of anything productive at all."[33] Freeman critiques Queer Studies' valorisation of melancholia, and its suspicion of happiness as unhelpful in explicating what she identifies as inappropriate eruptions of "eros in the face of sorrow as traces of past pleasures located in specific historical moments."[34] Dance that emerges through and in displacement but nevertheless draws attention to the beauty and virtuosity of the body and to the community created through collective joy, is one example of this eruption of eros in the face of sorrow. Its ability to short-circuit how we narrate those histories is akin to the interruptive force identified by María Rosa Menocal in lyric poems from early modern Iberia, that grieved privately the departure of Sephardic Jews into exile even while heroic narratives celebrated publicly the simultaneous departure of Columbus for the New World. Encrusted with traces from pasts and futures, such "shards of love," as Menocal terms these lyrics, are memory-triggers for layered temporalities that refuse to remember the "whole story" by indulging us with narrative context.[35] Like the lyric-shard, dance too is counter-narrative, interruptive and iterative. Performing the relationship between dreaming and recalling, it evades narrative's inevitable collusion of words, textuality and the power of telos. Through alegria of the body, dance derails linear time and tugs us into another time-space of knowing.

Multidirectionality: Grappling with Each Other

In a darkened church in The Hague, an audience hears a voice singing Indian classical music. As the light increases, two Black men, dressed in neutral tones of grey and beige, rush across the space. Stopping, starting, moving again, they seek

32 See Mbembe, *Necropolitics*; for my most recent articulation of "alegropolitics," see Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "Hortus Interruptus: A Time for Alegropolitics in Kashmir," in *Routledge Handbook for Critical Kashmir Studies*, eds. Mona Bhan, Haley Duschinski and Deepti Misri (London: Routledge, 2022), 81–92.

33 Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 59.

34 Freeman, *Time Binds*, 59.

35 María Rosa Menocal, *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

the source of the sound. It is a South Asian man dressed in similar colours, a shawl thrown around his shoulders. He walks towards and past them, singing. A tanpura (a South Asian stringed instrument) occupies the nave's far end, providing a focal point for the performers. The two dancers begin adapting their dance to his song through hiphop, other urban dance styles, and capoeira. Movements and voice mesh in a "trialogue." The singer begins to play on a pair of tablas. The dancers contort their bodies around him. He lies down on the floor with the tanpura, cradling it lovingly, while continuing to sing; they also move down low, grappling with each other with capoeira-like movements. Their heaving chests and breathing adds another percussive layer as do the South Asian anklets placed over their trainers. The singer strikes the tanpura with a stick as if it were a cello. He sings in a melody and style recognizable to South Asian ears, but the words are Portuguese: *brinca na areia* ("play on the sand"). As his voice soars, the dancers reach a crescendo of exertion, supporting yet challenging each other. Beads of sweat catch the light before sudden darkness announces the end. Stray bells from their anklets scatter across the floor like jasmine blossoms.

Blood: Fellowship of the Dance is a performance conceptualised and directed by Bahoran.[36] The performers are, like him, Dutch: the singer Raj Mohan is of Indo-Surinamese heritage and the dancers, Eddy Vidal and Ramos Sama, are of Angolan heritage. Together, they have created a dance and music piece that draws from the Surinamese preservation of Indian classical music, and urban street dance styles that, while global in their appeal, have an unambiguous Afro-diasporic heritage. The commonalities between different migrant histories emerge, as well as the difficulties we face in speaking to each other about those shared experiences. Once again, Bahoran creates a profoundly moving piece that, through dance and music, transmits an understanding of intra-diasporic relationships very different than what the text or even word can permit. Freed from the pressures to demonstrate any kind of authenticity, creolised dance and musical forms, the flotsam and jetsam of modernity, re-assemble through an audacity born under duress and a historical need to improvise. The phenomenological amenability of music and dance to technologies and forms of splicing, mixing, layering and sampling come together with the characteristics of African-heritage music and dance forms, particularly polyrhythm, syncopation and improvisation. These formal propensities enable a range of music and dance from migrant cultures to embrace and juxtapose the inheritances of diverse cultures, including forms developed by subjects of other migration histories. The epistemic work of *Blood* begins to approach what Freeman calls an *erotohistoriography*,

36 I saw *Blood: Fellowship of the Dance* in The Hague on 1 February 2017.

that "against pain and loss [. . .] posits the value of surprise, of pleasurable interruptions and momentary fulfillments from elsewhere, other times."[37]

Freeman's concept usefully supplements the study of narrative forms that are privileged within examinations of memory work. Our analytical reliance on, indeed preference for, narrative is closely linked with the privileging of testimony that arose through Freudian methods of psychoanalysis in which closure and a healthy working through are understood as beneficial for the traumatised psyche. Closure in these models is associated with storytelling that moves towards a denouement or conclusion; testimony is the act of telling one's story to an audience. Our inheritance of these juridical-psychoanalytical models is part and parcel of the modern condition and we cannot do away with them altogether in the study of memory. However, since memory is in reality messy, embodied, non-linear, contradictory and sedimented, we need approaches that recognise and work with these dimensions – an erotohistoriographic approach, if you will. For a critical methodology, such approaches imply the consideration of embodied and improvisatory practices alongside the work of the text – a dialogue between graphic and kinetic realms that unfolds performative, temporal and affective complexity in the act of memorialisation. Dance as a mimesis of performance, as well as a host of embodied practices – including festive processions and carnival parades – involves the strategic retrieval of joyous memories felt in the body collective. These fragments from the past splinter the present to offer opportunities for its reassemblage. The dancing body as archive-repertoire can scramble linear time and make the past literally inhabit the present in a process that undoes haunting; it is instead a coming-alive, the negation of zombification.

Sudesh Mishra has called this coming-alive "the radical potential" of Plantation rituals:[38] freed from history, at any moment, any body can aspire to feel the same way by literally going through their motions. The singing voice and/or percussive and musical instruments can assist in an exegetical or dialectical fashion, adding to the semiosis of polyrhythm. The repetition of ritual, anchored both in the repetitiveness of the lyrics and the repetition of dance movements, urges us to rethink the connection between repetition and melancholia that many of us have been trained to assume. Instead, mimesis becomes an epistemic mode: mimicking each other, repeatedly, we can sense through each other's bodies the histories of migration, displacement and trauma that would otherwise remain unknowable and siloed out of reach. This dancing body has the resources to be simultaneously

37 Freeman, *Time Binds*, 59.

38 Sudesh Mishra, "Tazia Fiji! The Place of Potentiality," in *Transnational South Asians: The Making of a Neo–Diaspora*, eds. Susan Koshy and R. Radhakrishnan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 71–94.

reminiscent of Asia, Africa and Europe, of many transoceanic journeys of ancestors, and of victims and perpetrators alike. It is an enactment of Michael Rothberg's concept of "multi-directional memory," which calls for the recognition of co-existing, overlapping but non-competitive modes of memorializing events that were experienced as traumatic for different identity-groups. On the stage, as on the dance floor, all competition converges in a shared desire to shine through and despite pain. The common quest is to create beauty through kinetic virtuosity and lever up through movement, the transgenerational sediments of modernity that weigh down the subject as inheritor of these histories and memories.

Newness: (Un)Making Migration Through Dance

"Grandparents." "Suriname." "Malaya." "Rubber Plantations." "Migrated." "India." "Australia." "Utrecht." These were the words that announced the presence on stage of two young men half hidden in the shadows – words that were fragments of two fragmented histories now sedimented in their bodies – their dancing bodies. Wrapped in an orange-gold silk sari that was at once placenta, straitjacket, security blanket and creative inspiration, these Siamese twins conjoined by history now leapt, struggled and contorted their bodies in a confrontation with themselves, their ancestors, their pasts, presents and futures – indeed time itself. When they broke free of this material, it was to initiate a movement-dialogue using their respective dance styles – bharatanatyam for Sooraj Subramaniam, and hip-hop for Shailesh Bahoran. This was *Material Men*, their inspired collaboration for the Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, unfolding before my stunned eyes at the Queen Elizabeth Hall of London's Southbank Centre.[39] Bahoran's *Lalla Rookh* had already convinced me that through dance there is indeed a way to link the African diaspora and Indian labour migrations that empire and capitalism triggered in waves. By combining the universal address of the language of hiphop with Indic rituals and gestures, and a soundtrack that brought the percussive rhythms of Urban dance with Indic melodies, Bahoran had created new solidarities between diasporic cultures which, even though embedded in the same national and transnational spaces, don't often collaborate or dialogue – except through dance. *Material Men* went a step further in this use of dance to effect a meeting of histories, diasporas and the oceans.

39 Premiered on 16 September 2015. For more information, see "Material Men redux," https://www.shobanajeyasingh.co.uk/works/material-men-redux/, *Shobana Jeyasingh Dance* (13 February 2023).

While Bahoran's ancestors had migrated to Suriname from eastern India to work on the sugarcane plantations after the abolition of slavery, Subramaniam's grandparents had been part of the Tamil diaspora that answered Malaya's need for labour on the British Empire's rubber plantations. They are the inheritors, therefore, of migrations across the Western and Eastern paths of the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The migrants were non-elite people, who had no idea where Surinam or Malaya was, how long the journey would be, that they would have to be on a ship for months. They were people attached to the land they tilled and in which their dead were buried; to the rivers they worshipped and washed clothes in. But they were also very poor, desperate to make a living, exploited by landlords and by empire. What did they have to lose? Some of them were widows with no social mobility and others were young men with a sense of adventure. All were told rather tall tales of prosperity and plenty by unscrupulous recruiters who were empire's middlemen. These recruiters organised their journeys from the hinterlands of Bihar or the Deccan to the busy imperial ports of Calcutta and Madras. There, after being contracted to work for a set period of years, they were bundled into ships and sent off to lands both far and relatively near – to Fiji in the Pacific, to Mauritius and Malaya in the Indian Ocean, to various Caribbean destinations, to Suriname on the edge of Amazonia.

Material Men's use of Subramaniam's dance repertoire alongside Bahoran's highlights two possible embodied responses to dance as liberation from this history. One chose to train in a dance style considered classical within South Asia, another took to an African-diasporic style. In *Material Men*, their dance styles bend, flex and gesticulate like their bodies to respond to each other's life path in dance. The sari that opens the show is their shared 'material' of histories of the heart – of difficult loves and private domains that lurk beneath official narratives and their deafening silences. It is the mother – "Mother India" – with its heavy demand of fidelity to an idea of home left far behind. Where and how does the diasporic subject find a toehold in that material/maternal vastness, always just out of reach? How does one acknowledge the caste-based oppression, collusions between colonisers and elites, and poverty that one's ancestors would have fled, and the adventure of new lives across the oceans? Is turning to "classical Indian dance" the answer, or adopting the styles forged by another diaspora? Dance allows all answers to be right answers. It allows a non-narrative freeing of histories that imprison. In the process, *Material Men* universalises particular and individual histories. The intimate chamber music composed by Elena Kats-Chernin that forms its score enabled this universalising process, especially when, at a climactic moment, it is punctuated by the vocables of Indic dance. Bharatanatyam and hip-hop bleed into each other to create a new thing without a name, yet another witness to the continuous production of newness that creolisation indicates.

At the same time, each dancer had already creolised his chosen dance style. Bahoran has been using hiphop to reproduce the robotic machine-metronome of Plantation time, while Subrahmaniam's pairing of traditional gold necklace with grey trousers and orange belt attested to his creative take on a very codified dance style. Now, dancing together, each with his own vocabulary struggled to make sense of history on a shared stage. As the agility of hiphop met the raised palms, *mudras*, and stately postures of Bharatanatyam, the difficulty and exhilaration of the experiment was apparent. Starting out as antagonistic, they ending up supporting each other. Their sweating, breathing and panting bodies embraced and intertwined and strained to converse while retaining individuality. Different ancestral histories and dance trajectories notwithstanding, *Material Men* embodied and performed the process whereby two dancers recognise and celebrate, and not just mourn, their similarities grounded in modernity's collective traumas of displacement and deracination. The heaving ribcages exposed by the dancers' bare torsos, which radiated masculinity, fragility, labour and beauty in equal measures, paid homage to another universal truth of modernity: the human body and its capacity to extract enjoyment and transcendence through labour and exhaustion. In Subrahmanyam's words, "there are moments in the striving for perfection that we forget to enjoy. In enjoying we get to just be, to embody. Shailesh and I were discussing recently that it is in enjoyment that the spirit of the dance is finally revealed. It is in that enjoyment that perfection or *ananda* (Sanskrit, "happiness") is attained.[40]

An Intimacy Produced by Degrees of Separation

On 26 February 1873, four hundred and ten people embarked on a ship called *Lalla Rookh* in the city I would be born in a century later. On the 5th of June that year, three hundred and ninety-nine of them disembarked in Paramaribo in Dutch Guiana, now Suriname (eleven had perished on the journey). They had left a British colony and arrived at a Dutch one. Two imperial powers had collaborated to enable this movement of labour across empires, continents and oceans. On arrival, they remade their lives. One of their descendants chose to retell the history of the voyage through the medium of dance and premiered it within the CaDance Festival in The Hague. I, descendant of those who were *not* compelled to embark on any voyage from that same city of Calcutta, chanced upon this performance. I was drawn to it, because of my equally chance visit to Suriname some

40 Social media exchange with Sooraj Subramaniam, September 2015.

years before I saw *Lalla Rookh*. And being part of its audience taught me something that no text could: that it was time to come alive to "this sweet touch from the world,"[41] in which we dwell as embodied intersubjective beings. I could not be a *jahaji-behen*, but I could claim my port-brother.

For a woman to declare a man her brother is an Indic act whose most obvious performative manifestation is the Hindu festival of Rakshabandhan, or the bond of rakhi.[42] The gendered and majoritarian dimensions of such a festival are obvious enough and have been critiqued by many. For me nevertheless to claim Bahoran as my brother is a radical affirmation of those affective intimacies which subtend and survive instrumentalization into all manner of layered oppressive systems. It is through those performed and reclaimed acts that I find a line connecting my work on the archive-repertoire of indentured labour migrations with earlier research on the Kashmir conflict referred to several times in this essay, and that I conducted from a position of citizenship that is now being identified by scholar-activists as contiguous with the Indian nation's settler colonialist approach to its cartographised peripheries.[43] It is not yet clear to me whether that line traces reparation or reification but it keeps me accountable to the subjects I choose to work on and with. It is not a straight line. This line follows the cracks on Partitioned ground out to the pagal samandar (mad sea). It tracks the rhythm of several subaltern histories to the beat of which some of us privileged enough have been invited to move with, to feel its reverberations at least unsettling the terrain we have come to stand on.

From the CaDance Festival brochures, banners and website, an arresting figure has been watching me. It is Shailesh Bahoran himself, in the guise of a contemporary Amazonian river-deity; painted blue like Krishna, wreathed with

41 Michael Ondaatje, *Anil's Ghost* (London: Picador, 2001), 307.

42 A "rakhi" is a decorative thread that a woman ties on to the wrist of a man in a performative declaration that asserts her claim on him as her brother, who will protect her henceforth. Although it is a Hindu ritual it is extremely common and indeed of added significance to find rakhis being tied across faiths. For some insight into this complex act, see Ruth Vanita, "Gender and Sexuality," in *Hinduism in the Modern World*, ed. Brian Hatcher (London: Routledge, 2015), 293–307.

43 See Hafsa Kanjwal, "Kashmir Diaspora Mobilizations: Toward Transnational Solidarity in an Age of Settler Colonialism," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Kashmir Studies*, eds. Mona Bhan, Deepti Misri and Hayley Duschinski (London: Routledge, 2023), 379–95; Goldie Osuri, "The Forms and Practices of Indian Settler/Colonial Sovereignty in Kashmir," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Kashmir Studies*, eds. Mona Bhan, Deepti Misri, and Hayley Duschinski (London: Routledge, 2023), 341–354; and Samreen Mushtaq and Mudasir Amin, "'We will Memorise our Home': Exploring Settler Colonialism as an Interpretive Framework for Kashmir," *Third World Quarterly*, 42.12 (2021), 3012–3029.

feathers and grass like a mythic figure from a Wilson Harris novel; sunglasses jauntily proclaiming his swag, and body arrested in a ribcage move that is typically Afro-diasporic. This palimpsest of a body is what Suriname, one of the most culturally and demographically mixed up places in the world brings to our consciousness. We are all more or less like that body. It is the labours of that body to which we owe the modern world, and which a production such as *Lalla Rookh* helps us know, and remember.

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Burcu Dogramaci

Chapter 13
Performing Migration: Želimir Žilnik and Medial (Self-)Representations of "Guest Workers" in the 1970s

Ever since the agreements on labour recruitment with Southeast European states, Munich was the hub for labour migration from countries like Turkey or Greece. Many thousands of migrants came to Germany by train and, after several days' journey, arrived on track 11 of Munich's central station. Here they were provided with papers and taken to a bunker below the tracks, where they were welcomed. They were told at which locations in Germany they would be working. From Munich many of the new arrivals were then sent to other German cities.[1] Thus, the first things many of them saw in Germany were a railway platform and a bunker.

In the public perception of labour migration, the workers who arrived in Germany have usually been regarded as victims or perpetrators. Migrants as people who have agency, who are resistant or creative are scarcely given a place in public perception. For some time now, post-migrant research has been demanding that migrants be given agency and that there be a space for their many voices to be heard. However, as early as in the 1970s and '80s, art works by Želimir Žilnik and Nil Yalter made it possible for migrants to speak up by offering them artistic space.

This essay will discuss what opportunities for personal empowerment artistic projects in particular provided to the migrants. To what extent could they already be given a voice here? The focus will be on Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11*, a video piece from 1975, devoted to inhabitants of an apartment house in Munich. Most of the people acting in Žilnik's video had migratory experiences, many of them lived as "guest workers" (Gastarbeiter) in Germany. In the following, their performance in front of the camera will be discussed in the context of self-representations of migrants.

1 Mark Terkessidis, *Migranten* (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 2000), 19.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110783810-013

Migrants as Foreigners: Medial Representations of "Guest Workers" in the 1970s

When Želimir Žilnik created his video *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* in Munich in 1975, migration in the Bavarian provincial capital had long since become a challenge. Some neighbourhoods were considered to be problematic, since the percentage of migrant workers who lived there was (too) high. Among them was the neighbourhood surrounding the central station, but also the Westend or Haidhausen. In the former commercial and working-class district of Westend small and medium-sized businesses rented entire vintage apartment buildings to provide accommodation for the migrant workers they employed.[2] In this and in other low-rent neighbourhoods, "guest workers" who searched for housing individually also found places to live. Very soon these neighbourhoods were considered problematic due to their high percentage of foreigners.

In 1972 the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* warned: "The influx must be controlled, since Munich, with 220,000 foreigners, has reached the limits of its absorption capacity."[3] And in 1973 the Munich district administrative officer Klaus Hahnzog proposed to the city council a plan that so-called "restricted zones for foreigners" be established to prevent the influx of "guest workers" into certain neighbourhoods.[4] Also along the same lines is the 1975 "Access Ban" enacted by the Federal German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; towns and rural districts should declare themselves to be congested residential areas if the percentage of migrants was more than 12 (sometimes even if more than 6%) – Munich made use of this among other German cities such as Cologne, Frankfurt/Main and Hannover. Entries in the passports of migrants stated that some cities were no-go areas.[5]

It is becoming clear that migration was seen not as enrichment, but rather as a stress test for urban coexistence. Since the mid-1970s and the early 1980s an increasing number of studies were published that dealt with migrant housing conditions in

2 Dennis Odukoya, "Westend Urban_Lab. Stigmatisierung und Instrumentalisierung von Migration in Debatten um das Münchner Westend," in *Crossing Munich. Beiträge zur Migration aus Kunst, Wissenschaft und Aktivismus*, eds. Natalie Bayer, Andrea Engl and Sabine Hess (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2009), 24.

3 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8.11.1972, quoted in Andrea Engl and Sabine Hess, "crossing munich. ein ausstellungsprojekt aus der perspective der migration," in *Crossing Munich. Beiträge zur Migration aus Kunst, Wissenschaft und Aktivismus*, eds. Natalie Bayer, Andrea Engl and Sabine Hess (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2009), 10 (own translation).

4 See Odukoya, "Westend Urban_Lab," 25.

5 See Terkessidis, *Migranten*, 28.

Germany.[6] What is striking here is a problem-oriented perspective: lack of access to the housing market, the poor condition of partly dilapidated buildings, but especially segregation and the emergence of "foreign 'ghettos'"[7] lead to the widespread assumption that integration and housing inevitably go hand in hand.[8] These treatises on the "housing problem of foreign workers in the Federal Republic"[9] bluntly observe a lack of symmetry between the housing situation of local people and that of immigrants. In 1970s articles in the print media also, there are stereotypical and undisguisedly racist allegations about migrants – for instance, when the magazine *Der Spiegel* repeatedly places the "Turkish apartment" (Türkenwohnung) in the context of fear of being overwhelmed by foreigners and of crime committed by immigrants. The photographs emphasise the cramped rooms and the (much too) large number of residents. In the staging of images and text, the wretched condition of the housing becomes a metaphor for the threat posed by immigration to a well-ordered German society.[10] It was specifically by pointing to housing conditions that migration was presented as a problem and deviation from the "norm." Lack of willingness to integrate or segregation were (and partly still are to this day) dominant issues in public speaking and writing about migration.[11]

What the above-mentioned political measures against the accumulation of migrants, the press reports and studies have in common is that they are speaking about a group of persons which itself is not given a voice. "The" foreigners or migrants all too often appear as a homogenous mass that causes problems or has difficulties. Here Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* (Germany, 1975, video,

6 To be mentioned: Angelika Schildmeier, *Integration und Wohnen. Analyse der Wohnsituation und Empfehlungen zu einer integrationsgerechten Wohnungspolitik für ausländische Arbeitsnehmer und ihre Familien*, GEWOS-Schriftenreihe, NF, 14 (Hamburg: Hammonia, 1975); Stefanie Keilig, *Wohnverhältnisse der Familien ausländischer Arbeitnehmer in einer mittelgroßen Industriestadt, dargestellt am Beispiel der türkischen Arbeitsnehmer eines großen Industriebetriebes: Eine sozialhygienische Studie*, PhD thesis, Julius Maximilians University Würzburg, 1980; Ulla-Kristina Schuleri-Hatje, *Ausländische Arbeitnehmer und ihre Familien. Teil 1: Wohnverhältnisse* (Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik difu, 1982); Cihan Arin, ed., *Ausländer im Wohnbereich* (Berlin: Express Edition, 1983).

7 Schildmeier, *Integration und Wohnen*, 37.

8 Same argument in Schildmeier, *Integration und Wohnen*, 1975; and Schuleri-Hatje, *Ausländische Arbeitnehmer*.

9 Keilig, *Wohnverhältnisse der Familien*, 3.

10 See among others, "Ausländerkinder – 'ein sozialer Sprengsatz,'" *Der Spiegel* 43 (22 October 1978), 86 and 90.

11 See Sylvia Hahn, *Historische Migrationsforschung* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 2012), 15; Sabine Hess, "Politiken der (Un-)Sichtbarmachung: Eine Kritik der Wissens- und Bilderproduktionen zu Migration," in *Nach der Migration: Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, eds. Erol Yildiz and Marc Hill (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015), 49–64.

9 minutes, camera: Andrej Popović) sets an example – or rather, the work takes an opposing position. Metzstraße is in the French Quarter (Franzosenviertel) of the Munich neighbourhood of Haidhausen (Fig. 1).[12]

Fig. 1: Munich-Haidhausen, Metzstraße 11 (*Google Maps*). Map data ©2020 COWI, GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009) Imagery ©2020, GeoContent, Maxar Technologies.

This Munich neighbourhood was initially a district of artisans and blue-collar workers, and since the 1960s, because of the low rents, it was also a popular residential area for migrants. In the 1970s, as "Little Istanbul" or "North Naples," the neighbourhood was regarded primarily as an area inhabited by Southern or Southeastern European migrant workers.[13] It is against this historical context that

12 From 1870 onwards, in the course of planning the then new Ostbahnhof, a new residential district was built in the former suburb of Haidhausen, some of whose streets were named after battle sites of the 1870/71 war against France ("Orleansplatz," "Sedanstraße"). The name "Metzstraße" goes back to the capital of the Lorraine region, which became part of the German Empire in 1870/71. Cf. Martin Arz, *Haidhausen: Reiseführer für Münchner* (Munich: Hirschkäfer, 2013), 82 and 120.

13 See Arz, *Haidhausen*, 11.

Žilnik's film must be viewed. The multifamily house in Metzstraße 11 was a building inhabited by migrant workers.

Inhabited by Migrants: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* (1975)

Fig. 2: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

Želimir Žilnik's nine-minute film begins with the film's title, "Inventur," and with the name of the street and house number (Fig. 2). This gives the film a location. Žilnik positioned his camera near a stairway in the apartment building. The residents of the house walk down the stairs one after another, stop and speak in front of the camera (Fig. 3), but look sideways, presumably at the producer and artist Žilnik, who, however, does not appear in the picture himself. They say their names, talk about their housing situation. They speak about rents, the size of their apartments and their general living situation. They discuss their work, their private life and family situation. They describe their relation to the city in which they live. They speak about work and unemployment, longing and love, frustration and anger. Appearing before the camera are children and adults, teenagers, men and women, fathers, mothers, husbands, single people (Fig. 4–8). The residents of the

Fig. 3: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

building express themselves in German or in the language of their country of origin; at times the two get mixed up. The film has English subtitles, so that even the remarks in the foreign language can be consistently understood.

The film shows the diversity of the residents of Metzstraße 11, who came to Munich from, among other countries, Greece, Turkey and Italy, and who here reveal their fulfilled or disappointed longings and expectations.[14] Some of them are looking for work, others complain about the high rent. They feel contented or unhappy, have been settled for life in the Bavarian capital for many years, or view the near future with pessimism. The inhabitants of the house also include a German domestic migrant, a woman who moved from Hamm to Munich and – like some of the others – is looking for work. Thus, the film makes no distinction between origin and nationality – everyone is given the same space to speak out. The very last to appear is the building's caretaker, who expresses his satisfaction with the residents.

It is central for the dramatic composition of the film that those who appear obviously determine the content of their contribution, the language, the length of their appearance, themselves. Thus, the performative contributions for, and in

14 A very short description of the film is provided by Bert Rebhandl, "The Borders of Paradise: Želimir Žilnik between Artistic Strategies and Political Systems," in *Shadow Citizens – Želimir Žilnik*, ed. What, How & for Whom, exh. cat. Edith-Russ-House for Media Art, Oldenburg, 2019, 45.

Fig. 4–8: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, 9 minutes, 16 mm, color, photographs from the film (https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/inventory-inventur-metzstrasse-11, © Želimir Žilnik).

front of, the camera also have a self-empowering character. No one introduces the speakers, no questions are asked and there is no voice-over. The responsibility for what is offered lies with the actors. This is also reinforced by the motionless camera perspective. Clearly the function of the camera here is passive recording. Facing the camera, activity unfolds, and the people who appear themselves determine how long they will be before the camera. Speaking about *Inventur – Metzstraße 11*, Aurora Rodonò correctly stated: "Formally this short film moves beyond an ethnographic view

insofar as the protagonists themselves participate in the process of staging and are thus performers of their own role."[15]

At this point it is important to query the terms "performance" or "to perform" in greater detail: "performance" as a scholarly category was developed in the early sixties, among other things in the speech act theory of John L. Austin. Incidentally, the German translation of Austin's basic work *How to Do Things with Words* dates back to 1972 and thus into chronological proximity to Žilnik's film. According to Austin the term "performance" implies that language can carry out actions and thus creates reality; it is to this aspect that the English term "to perform" refers.[16] Its etymological roots are in the Middle English "parformen" (with recourse to "form") and in the Old French "fournir" ("to provide or furnish something"). The term performative was further used in cultural-philosophical gender theory, particularly by Judith Butler, who describes sexual identities as bodily enactments.[17] At the end of the 1960s the term performance was first used by artists in reference to their work.

With regard to Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11*", at least two meanings of performance as enactment can be identified: On the one hand, performative acting out before the eye of the camera is an enactment of individual life histories. On the other hand, the camera, and along with it the producer, acts performatively in terms of making something visible. In English the term "performance" means not only presentation or representation as artistic practice, not only cultural practices from political speeches to ceremony to ritual. "Performing something" means making it manifest.[18] "Performing something" means, in reference to Žilnik's film, creating meaning, producing and reconstructing (hi)story(ies). *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* is an alternative contribution to migration history in/to Germany in that it articulates "situated knowledge from a migrant point of view"

15 Aurora Rodonò, "Geschichte(n) gegen-den-Strich-. Projekt Migration: eine interdisziplinäre Ausstellung zu Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte der Migration in Deutschland," in *Berliner Blätter, Ethnographische und ethnologische Beiträge* 46 (2008): *Kunst und Ethnographie: Zum Verhältnis von visueller Kultur und ethnographischer Arbeiten*: 179.

16 See John L. Austin, *Zur Theorie der Sprechakte (How to do things with Words)* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972), 35–37. Definitions and etymologies are mentioned by Amelia Jones, "To Perform; Performativity; Performance . . . And the Politics of the Material Trace," in *PER/FORM: How to Do Things with[out] Words*, ed. Chantal Pontbriand, exh. cat. CA2M. Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid 2014, 59. On John L. Austin's theory, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 31–36.

17 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

18 Cf. Petra Maria Meyer, "Performance im medialen Wandel: Einleitender Problemaufriss," in *Performance im medialen Wandel*, ed. Petra Maria Meyer (Munich: Fink, 2006), 36.

and thus expands hegemonic "official" knowledge, such as that found in textbooks, for instance. In her reflections on "situated knowledges" Donna Haraway assumes that (scientific) research is limited and does not come into being "objectively." Rather, it is the social circumstances, experiences and contexts within which action takes place that determine thinking and acting.[19] For artistic practice, one might infer from this that migration history in a "situated knowledge from a migrant point of view"[20] is inscribed in the acting subject. The actors' or subjects' own standpoint is inevitably reflected as well.

Žilnik's film makes the subjective knowledge of the migrants themselves, which is too rarely seen and heard, the focus of his work. His film gives the speakers an artistic space where they can be heard and seen. They are thus given the opportunity to speak up for themselves and to articulate their insiders' perspectives of their country of immigration, Germany.

The title of the film ironically alludes to the meaning of the term "Inventur" ("inventory"), which means the "[r]ecording of the assets and debts of an enterprise, in the case of tangible goods by counting, measuring and weighing."[21] In Žilnik's film the residents of the building are counted as they would be during an inventory: they appear before the camera in a row, one after another. At the same time the film's title ironically refers to a numerically quantifiable migration which allows no conclusions to be drawn about the persons, memories and stories behind the figures. Žilnik's "inventory," however, aims at the opposite: the gesture of stocktaking is disrupted by individual speaking, and by the actors looking forward and back at their migration history.[22]

Želimir Žilnik's particular empathy for migrants is coupled with his own experience of exile. The Yugoslavian-Serbian filmmaker left his native land in the 1970s for political reasons and lived in Germany for a few years. It is here that he

19 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 144.3 (1988): 575–599.

20 See also the discussion on migrant-situated knowledge in Ayşe Güleç, "Cana Bilir-Meier: Bewegungen zwischen den Archiven – Dekolonisierung von Disziplinen / Movements between Archives – Decolonizing Disciplines," in *Camera Austria* 141 (2018): 33.

21 "Inventur," *Brockhaus Lexikon*, vol. 8: Hau–Irt, Munich: dtv, 1992, 321. Own translation.

22 With the title *Inventur*, Žilnik's film inevitably evokes references to a genuine German history of expulsion and dislocation, for *Inventur* is also the title of Günter Eich's poem in which he listed his belongings in the prison camp of Remagen in 1945. For Eich's poem, cf. Günter Eich, "Inventur," in *Nachkrieg und Unfrieden: Gedichte als Index 1945–1995*, eds. Hilde Domin and Clemens Greve (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 15. See also Jürgen Zenke, "Poetische Ordnung als Ortung des Poeten: Günter Eichs *Inventur*," in *Gedichte und Interpretationen*, vol. 6: *Gegenwart*, ed. Walter Hinck (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 72–82.

shot not only *Inventur – Metzstraße 11*, but also the short films *Request (Antrag)* (1974) and *House Orders (Hausordnung)" (1975)*. In 1975, Žilnik made *Farewell (Abschied)*: after working for five years, a BMW factory worker prepares for his return trip to Serbia by train. He recapitulates his stay in Munich and speaks about new things and habits he has acquired during his time in Germany.[23] The films Žilnik made in Germany must be seen in the context of his entire oeuvre, which spans the years from 1967 to the most recent present. Thus, he was interested in "invisible, suppressed, and under- and misrepresented members of society and relates to themes that run through the director's filmography, such as questions of shadow economies, borders, migration, labor, terrorism, revolutionary fatigue, clashes of parallel modernisms, and more."[24] The residents of the building in Metzstraße 11, too, were not present in public discourse, but were part of a group perceived as anonymous – "guest workers." Here is what Helmuth Berking writes about how migrants are perceived: "From the perspective of mainstream society, migrants are not 'people like us', because they don't do things the way they must be done and have always been done."[25] Žilnik's film has given these people, who were tagged as foreign and were at the same time invisible, a name, a (hi)story, a presence. They are people among other people, in other words they are renters, working people or people looking for work, married or single, persons with bitter and good experiences.

Post-Migrant Art Avant la Lettre: Videos by Nil Yalter and Želimir Žilnik

In 1977 the artist Nil Yalter showed her multimedia work *Turkish Immigrants* at the Biennale de Paris. It was created in collaboration with Nicole Croiset und the sociologists Gaye Petek-Salom and Jack Salom. "Turkish Immigrants" deals with

23 See the filmography in *Shadow Citizens – Želimir Žilnik*, ed. What, How & for Whom / WHW, exh. cat. Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg, 2019, 140. See also https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/filmography (1 May 2023).

24 What, How & For Whom / WHW, "Želimir Žilnik – Shadow Citizens," in *Shadow Citizens – Želimir Žilnik*, ed. What, How & for Whom / WHW, exh. cat. Edith-Russ-Haus for Media Art, Oldenburg, 2019, 17. For Žilnik's interest in (hi)stories of migration see his theatre play *The Gastarbeiter-Opera* (1977), "following several women from rural areas in Yugoslavia as they travel to West Germany as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers)." *Shadow Citizens – Želimir Žilnik*, 115.

25 Helmuth Berking, "Der Migrant," in *Diven, Hacker, Spekulanten. Sozialfiguren der Gegenwart*, eds. Stephan Moebius and Markus Schroer (Berlin: edition Suhrkamp, 2010), 295.

Turkish migrant workers in Paris. On the exhibition monitors women, men and children tell their stories; displayed on the walls are photographs of the interviewed migrants, on which Yalter in turn based some drawings. In these, the artist abstracted the facial features and bodies of those portrayed; instead of the faces you now have blank spaces.[26] The individuals turn into unidentifiable persons. These drawn portraits contrast with the filmed closeups of the interviewed persons who speak about their language difficulties or their worries about papers they require. Since the monitors are set up in a circle, the narratives overlap and become (more) incomprehensible; not without good reason Yalter has subtitled the installation "Tower of Babel." The individual stories can hardly be distilled from the babble of overlaid voices. You have to concentrate very hard and be quite close to the individual monitors in order to engage with each particular person.

While Želimir Žilnik gave his actors a stage and thus basically broke through the walls of the house on Metzstraße 11, Yalter interwove the presence of the migrant workers with how society perceived them. Not listening to them, not seeing them and making them invisible becomes a defining component of her installation. In Yalter's work, the diversity of migrant narrative is multi-layered, and demands concentration on the part of the audience. In order to understand, one must begin by listening.

Early on already, the two works, which were created in the 1970s and thus several years after the beginning of Southeast European labour migration to West European states, take an artistic approach to the topic. They work with the persons who were the subject of public debates without *themselves* getting a chance to speak. In their work from the 1970s, Žilnik and Yalter thus anticipate a post-migrant perspective. In recent years a post-migrant paradigm has developed – proceeding from the performing arts, theatre studies, sociology and cultural anthropology. Naika Foroutan defines this paradigm as follows: "Post-migrant [. . .] stands for an analytical perspective which addresses societal conflicts, identity politics as well as social and political transformations that begin once the migration is complete and which re-examines social relationships over and above the

26 See *Nil Yalter. Exile is a hard job*, exh. cat. Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2019, 119. The artist comments on the faces erased in the drawings as follows: "The faces of the people were already visible in the photos. It was not necessary and not right to repeat them. The interviewees had lost a certain part of their identity. They would never fully recover from it. My drawings represent this loss." Rita Kerstin and Nil Yalter, "Qui parle? Ein Gespräch zwischen Rita Kersting und Nil Yalter," in *Nil Yalter: Exile is a hard job*, exh. cat. Museum Ludwig, Cologne 2019, 47. Own translation.

socially established dividing line between migrants and non-migrants."[27] Erol Yildiz expands this understanding of what post-migrant means by calling for polyphonic narratives as well: "Realities will become visible whose polysemy and polyphony will gradually cast doubt on national interpretations."[28] Based on these definitions of a post-migrant influx, the work by Želimir Žilnik discussed here (as well as that of Nil Yalter[29]) can be described as post-migrant art avant la lettre.

Žilnik shows a housing community which has long since become diversified as more people have moved in. Living on the various floors of the multi-family dwelling are people who for the most part have experienced migration. *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* takes stock and at the same time keeps people from disappearing behind the figures. Moreover, the film documents a status quo and is thus part of the work of remembering German history in the second half of the twentieth century. For further investigation, Žilnik's video could be embedded in the context of German films of the 1970s (although there are differences concerning length, narrativity and aesthetics), in which the topic of labour migration was treated more comprehensively for the first time: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Angst essen Seele auf* (1973), Helma Sander's *Shirins Hochzeit* (1975) and Werner Schroeter's *Palermo oder Wolfsburg* (1979/80).

It is remarkable, however, that Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* has long since moved out of the cinema/television context and in recent years has attracted attention primarily in the art world. It is particularly the fact that the video has been repeatedly performed up to the present and beyond that contributes to the repetition of this work of remembering. Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* increasingly attracted attention in past years, was screened during the 2018 Balkan Days at the Gasteig in Munich, in 2019 at the Tower^{MMK} in Frankfurt am Main and, in the same year, at the NS-Dokumentationszentrum [National Socialism Documentation Centre] Munich as part of the group exhibition *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow* (Fig. 9, 10).

27 Naika Foroutan, "Die postmigrantische Perspektive: Aushandlungsprozesse in pluralen Gesellschaften," in *Postmigrantische Visionen: Erfahrungen – Ideen – Reflexionen*, eds. Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 15.

28 Erol Yildiz, "Vom methodologischen Nationalismus zu postmigrantischen Visionen," in *Postmigrantische Visionen: Erfahrungen – Ideen – Reflexionen*, eds. Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 49.

29 For Yalter in particular, further research should also focus on the post-colonial migration from North Africa that is present in France. It would be informative to examine whether the smaller community of Turkish labour migrants was perceived differently in France (also artistically) than in Germany, for example.

Fig. 9, 10: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

Especially the screenings in Munich, the town where *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* was made, demonstrate that memories in their medialised form can migrate and change. It has been years since Haidhausen was a neighbourhood with a high percentage of migrants: it is now an upscale district. The increased prices per square metre in Metzstraße can be reconstructed with the help of the website Immobilienscout. The former inhabitants no longer live in this neighbourhood, which has in the meantime been redeveloped and renovated – in the late 1970s, the Bavarian provincial capital of Munich began a major renovation project in Haidhausen which ultimately contributed significantly to the gentrification of the district. *Inventur – Metzstraße 11* reminds us of the one-time inhabitants of the house and "resurrects" them repeatedly as the video is played over and over again on loop – which is how the work was presented, for instance, at the National Socialism Documentation Centre. For Žilnik's 2018 solo exhibition at the Edith-Russ-Haus in Oldenburg the curators of What, How & for Whom/WHW chose the title *Shadow Citizens*. This title refers to the fact that Žilnik dealt with "shadow citizens," that is, people who are marginalised in society.

In the context of this shadow and of being haunted by phantoms, I should like in conclusion to turn to Aby Warburg's reflections on the return of images, which Georges Didi-Humerman addressed in his re-reading. Didi-Huberman writes:

> With regard to the "analysis of the times" one wonders first of all whether there is not a time of images that is neither "life and death" nor "greatness and decline," nor that ideal "renaissance" whose meaning historians constantly adapt to their own needs. Is there not perhaps also a *time for phantoms*, a return of images, an "afterlife" that is not subject to the transmission model of works from antiquity being imitated by more recent ones?[30]

Didi-Huberman here refers to an *Eigenzeit* of images, which disengages from overarching temporal systems. At the same time, it becomes clear that what is past can continue to resonate in images as something unresolved, something that was never completed. Warburg's reflections on the "afterlife"[31] and their reinterpretations by Georges Didi-Huberman are extremely productive for the relationship between medial recording and performance in *Inventur – Metzstraße 11*. The photographed moving image has an *Eigenzeit* that emancipates itself from the temporality of the event. An origin cannot be reconstructed, the original performative act has been overwritten and rewritten by the act of being captured on film. It is thus that the live event in the film of the performance lives on perpetually, and is in existence synchronously and continuously.

The images of the migrants of 1975 return to the present as representatives of repressed migration history in the Federal Republic of Germany every time the work is performed again. The "shadow citizens," something that was ostensibly dealt with long ago, never get any peace.

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30 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Das Nachleben der Bilder. Kunstgeschichte und Phantomzeit nach Aby Warburg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 29. Emphasis in the original. Own translation.

31 The term unfolds in the index to Warburg's posthumously published collected writings, in which the entry "Antike, Nachleben" ["Antiquity, afterlife"] has numerous sub-entries ranging from various authors and pictorial motifs to monuments and forms of transmission. See Aby Warburg, *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Europäischen Renaissance* (1932). Gesammelte Schriften, vol. I, 2, eds. Gertrud Bing and Fritz Rougement (Berlin: Akademie, 1998), 670–673. And in 1912, Warburg speaks in a lecture of "surviving pictorial ideas of the pagan culture of the eastern Mediterranean peoples." Aby Warburg, "Italienische Kunst und internationale Astrologie im Palazzo Schifanoja zu Ferrara," 1912, in *Nachhall der Antike: Zwei Untersuchungen*, presented by Pablo Schneider (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2012), 36.

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Figures

Fig. 1: Munich-Haidhausen, Metzstraße 11 (*Google Maps*). Map data ©2020 COWI, GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009) Imagery ©2020, GeoContent, Maxar Technologies.

Fig. 2: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

Fig. 3: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

Fig. 4–8: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, 9 minutes, 16 mm, color, photographs from the film (https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/inventory-inventur-metzstrasse-11, © Želimir Žilnik).

Fig. 9, 10: Želimir Žilnik's *Inventur – Metzstraße* 11, 1975, exhibition view *Tell me about ~~yesterday~~ tomorrow*, NS-Dokumentationszentrum, Munich, 2019 (photo: Burcu Dogramaci, © Želimir Žilnik).

Jennifer Leetsch

Chapter 14
Walking the Land: Theatre, Landscape and Britain's Migratory Past in *Black Men Walking*

Introduction

This chapter examines a Black British theatre performance which re-claims rural landscape by way of revealing migratory knowledges, memories and histories as an integral part of it. The focal point is *Black Men Walking*, a play which premiered to wide-ranging success in 2018 and which offers a critical and creative reconsideration of British rurality. *Black Men Walking* was written by Testament, also known as Andy Brooks, a Yorkshire-based poet and hip-hop MC, directed by Dawn Walton and co-produced by her company Eclipse, "the foremost Black-led national production company in the UK,"[1] and the Royal Exchange Theatre. *Black Men Walking* was the first touring production emerging from Revolution Mix, Walton's initiative to uncover 500 years of hidden Black British history via theatre, film and radio projects.[2] The play was inspired by a real-life walking group from Yorkshire, the Sheffield Black Men's Walking Group, and portrays three men who either recently migrated to the UK or grew up there as first and second-generation immigrants, and a young black woman who seeks refuge from the city bustle in the countryside. On their way through the Peak District National Park, the four unearth centuries of Britain's black history.

In the following, I will discuss the question of how *Black Men Walking*, a communal and epoch-spanning story of Britain's migratory black population, uses theatre to illuminate place-based experiences in nature and to activate nature as a visitable, inhabitable past.[3] This chapter thus offers an ecocritical position in an

1 "Who are Eclipse," https://eclipsetheatre.org.uk/about/who-are-eclipse, Eclipse Theatre (20 May 2021).
2 For more background on Eclipse Theatre and Revolution Mix's history, see D. Keith Peacock, "The Social and Political Context of Black British Theatre: The 2000s," in *Modern and Contemporary Black British Drama*, eds. Mary Brewer, Lynette Goddard and Deirdre Osborne (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 147–160.
3 When I use the terms "nature" and "landscape," I do so in full consciousness of their complexity and weight. The theoretical field of ecocriticism has fundamentally reconfigured our understanding of and our relationship to non-human life worlds, most recently with a view towards postcolonial, planetary approaches and as implicated in power relations of race, gender, sexuality, class or

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edited volume focussed on the creative performances of migration knowledges and migration imaginaries. This contribution shows how a theatre play can transfer migratory knowledge onto the stage in imaginary re-enactments, as the environments of the Yorkshire countryside hills are pulled into the space of the theatre which is shared by players and audiences across England. I am interested in processes of transferral, of migrating knowledge from one context to another, from one medium to another, from one bodily experience to another. To provide the necessary conceptual background to my discussions of the play, the chapter will first sketch the quandaries surrounding black nature and black movement in Britain's landscapes, and the play's origins and production contexts, before diving into both play text and performance to discuss a number of aesthetic strategies of making migratory histories knowable and imaginable.

Green Unpleasant Lands: Rural Britain and Black British Interventions

In September 2020, the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, the UK's foremost charity and membership organisation for heritage conservation, released a report documenting "the historic sources of wealth linked to the global slave trades, goods and products of enslaved labour and the East India Company for significant buildings and estates in our care."[4] This report brought under way a long overdue examination of Britain's national heritage in connection to empire. It identified ninety-three of the Trust's estates as having links to

species. Especially with regards to a black imaginary of nature, as Carolyn Finney points out, we need to remain critical of widespread dualisms such as nature/culture or civilised/primitive: black people "have been negatively depicted in relationship to nature while reinforcing the idea that the environment is a 'white' space and a white concern." See Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 17. Nature and landscape, in this chapter, are thus understood as dynamic cultural, political, material and affective processes, which we can, following Berberich, Campbell and Hudson, "feel, sense, know, cherish, memorise, imagine, dream, desire or even fear." Cf. Christine, Berberich, Neil Campbell and Robert Hudson, eds., *Affective Landscapes in Literature, Art and Everyday Life: Memory, Place and the Senses* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), n. pag.

4 "We've published our report into colonialism and historic slavery," https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/news/weve-published-our-report-into-colonialism-and-historic-slavery, *National Trust*, 16 September 2020 (7 February 2023).

the country's slaveholding past and thus "challenged its status as a quiet place of veneration – an idyll from a benign and gently ordered past," instead seeking to "recast the properties as instruments of power, display, and self-invention."[5]

Stating that colonialism and slavery were central to the UK's national economy from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (and onwards) seems obvious, and yet the publication of the report lead to a concerted smear campaign by conservative National Trust members and members of both the British public and the government against the authors of the report: experts, academics, activist and conservatists who brought to light the inextricably entangled histories of British land possession and country houses with the slave trade and slavery. A much-needed engagement with the past, of which the Trust's report is a commendable example, was met by increasing hostility by those who have profited from exactly these histories. Calling into question a seemingly unblemished past by making visible violent histories of the colonial-capitalist machinery of empire and the deadly exploitation of 'other lands' (factually responsible for the generational wealth circulating through the British nation), caused an outrage which had at its heart the complaint that such reports destroy the peace – and that being forced to think about one's national history and its implications ruins the enjoyment of what poet William Blake had once called "England's green & pleasant Land."[6]

What such claims seem to forget, however, is that the outdoors has always been, especially for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic Britons, a highly contested space of exclusion. In her book *Green Unpleasant Land*, the literary historian Corinne Fowler, one of the National Trust Interim Report's editors and contributors, writes that "the countryside is a terrain of inequalities," "a place of particular hostility to those who are seen as not to belong, principally Black and Asian Britons."[7] Instead of a sanctuary or Edenic idyll, the countryside and related activities, such as the joys of birdwatching, garden tending or vigorous exertion that seem to be thought of as the bastions of British leisure and pleasure, have frequently been denied to those perceived as other.[8]

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5 Sam Knight, "Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History,"https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/23/britains-idyllic-country-houses-reveal-a-darker-history, *New Yorker*, 16 August 2021 (7 February 2023).

6 William Blake, "Preface to Milton," in *Blake: The Complete Poems*, 3rd ed., ed. W.H. Stevenson (London and New York: Routledge 2007), 503.

7 Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural Britain's Colonial Connections* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2020), 50–51.

8 For foundational scholarship on this, cf. Julian Agyeman, "Black People in a White Landscape: Social and Environmental Justice," *Built Environment* 16.3 (1990): 232–236; Neil Chakraborti and Jon Garland, "England's Green and Pleasant Land? Examining Racist Prejudice in a Rural Context," *Patterns of Prejudice* 38.4 (2004): 383–398; Sarah Neal, *Rural Identities: Ethnicity and*

As the poet and scholar Jason Allen-Paisant astutely argues, "[l]andscape and the possibilities of landscape are underpinned by socio-economic dynamics rooted in a colonial history and its afterlives."[9] One of the people to have named these underpinnings perhaps most urgently is the Black British artist and photographer Ingrid Pollard. In projects such as *Pastoral Interlude* (1987–1988), *The Cost of the English Landscape* (1989), *Wordsworth's Heritage* (1992) and *Self Evident* (1995), Pollard places herself and other black people into British landscape, consequently de-romanticising Britain's rural environments. The simple portrait photographs topple conventional associations between blackness and nature. As she says:

> Britain has traditionally been represented by an idealised rural landscape [. . .]. This work disrupts such simple common-sense notions by placing issues and British identity over these polarities. Ownership of land, commerce, economic development, and English involvement in the Atlantic slave trade are elements in this work that look at the construction of the Romantic countryside idyll.[10]

In one of the photographs from the series *Pastoral Interludes* we see a black woman with a camera in her lap, possibly a self-portrait of the artist, sitting on a low stone wall amidst tall grasses, the sprawling brown and green hills in the background separated from the subject and the stone wall by chain-wire fencing and barbed wire.[11] An everyday sight of rural Britain (the fencing installed to keep sheep or cattle from escaping their pastures), the presence of the woman transforms this scene into an astute, strident commentary on how black people are met with often deadly hostility in rural contexts. This is emphasized by the text beneath the picture which states "[. . .] it's as if the Black experience is only lived within an urban environment. I thought I liked the Lake District; where I wandered lonely as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease; dread [. . .]."[12] The overt reference to Wordsworth's famous Romantic poem and his home, the Lake District, one of England's most attractive destinations for tourists, links landscape to heritage, the nation, identity and race. In Pollard's work, the wilful black body in nature

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Community in the Contemporary English Countryside (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); and Sarah Neal and Julian Agyeman, eds., *The New Countryside? Ethnicity, Nation and Exclusion in Contemporary Rural Britain* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006).

9 Jason Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," *PN Review 257* 47.3 (January–February 2021), n. pag. https://www.pnreview.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?item_id=10904 (7 February 2023).

10 Ingrid Pollard, "'Pastoral Interlude', 1988," http://www.ingridpollard.com/pastoral-interlude.html, *Ingrid Pollard Photography* (7 February 2023).

11 Pollard, "'Pastoral Interlude', 1988."

12 Pollard, "'Pastoral Interlude', 1988."

negotiates questions of alienation and belonging, while at the same time radically transforming its surroundings by its presence and by its frank engagement with the nation's exclusionary tendencies.

At play here is the radicalisation and racialisation of the English pastoral enacted by those termed other to the bulwark of the white, hegemonic nation. What we could call post-pastoral or postcolonial pastoral[13] recovers a connection with the past and the land, but not in the traditional sense. Nature emerges as both refuge and as a loaded, potentially violent space, activating the "polyvalent and overlapping meanings of 'the country' within the global legacy of British colonialism"[14] – and it is from this side-by-side that productive renegotiations emerge. Next to Ingrid Pollard and Jason Allen-Paisant, whose recently published poetry collection *Thinking with Trees* evokes "the environmental conditions underpinning Black identity, while urging us to imagine alternative futures,"[15] there are others who have taken up this call to unsettle simple and uncomplicated notions of the green pleasant land. A new generation of Black British nature writers and artists strives to confront Britain's racism as it burrows deep within its landscapes, among them Louisa Adjoa Parker, Laura Barker, Victoria Adukwei Bulley, Niellah Arboine, Elizabeth-Jane Burnett, Tjawangwa Dema, Marchelle Farrell and Zakiya McKenzie. These creators unapologetically link their own histories and memories of migration, diaspora and displacement to an either inherent or acquired embodied knowledge of the land, thus working against the "positioning of the Black body always outside of land"[16] and reaching for the possibility of a cultural and imaginative geography that transforms rural Britain.

Black Walking as Reclamation

The play *Black Men Walking* is another such example of destabilising conventional frames of belonging in and moving through landscapes, of acquiring an alternative knowledge of oneself and one's surroundings. The inspiration for the play was a walking group in Sheffield, encompassing men from different strands of the

13 Cf. Corinne Fowler, "The Rural Turn in Contemporary Writing by Black and Asian Britons," *Interventions* 19.3 (2017): 395–415, and Rob Nixon, *London Calling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

14 Lucienne Loh, *The Postcolonial Country in Contemporary Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

15 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag. Cf. also Jason Allen-Paisant, *Thinking with Trees* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2021).

16 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag.

African and Caribbean diaspora who now live in Britain. Director Dawn Walton and writer Testament joined the walking group and spun their ideas for the play from this real-life example – a group of Black men trying to carve out a niche for themselves in Britain's rural environment while also promoting health and well-being among Yorkshire's black population. When Maxwell Ayamba, a Ghanaian journalist, co-founded the group in 2004, then called *100 Black Men Walk for Health*, he had "one simple aim: get black men walking. [. . .] Ayamba believes exercise and the outdoors can help and states that the walking group functions as a safe space, somewhere to bond with each other and to bond with nature."[17] Through organised and communal walking, Ayamba and his co-founders not only hoped to combat "diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, vitamin D deficiency,"[18] but to also find, in this self-determined endeavour, an antidote to the inherent racism that often meets black people in rural spaces.[19]

Moving through landscape is a fraught thing for black people. Turning to questions of mobility, migration and displacement in connection to nature reveals yet another layer of the complicated entanglement of black bodies in rurality. As the poet Bridget Minamore writes, "[m]any immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean come from rural areas, and movement – or more specifically, displacement – goes hand in hand with being part of the African diaspora."[20] The image of black people moving through different geographies across the globe evokes certain watershed moments in global history, "from the death walks through West Africa to reach slave ships, to the American civil rights marches in the 1960s,"[21] or, more recently, the so-called European migrant crisis and the hopeful, desperate, deathly traversing of those seeking refuge along Europe's fortified borders. As she accompanies Testament and the Yorkshire Walking Group through the Peak District, Minamore reflects on the strange and unsettling feeling of walking with a group of black hikers:

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17 Bridget Minamore, "*Black Men Walking*: A Hilly Hike through 500 Years of Black British History," https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jan/23/black-men-walking-royal-exchange-manchester-testament, *The Guardian*, 23 January 2018 (7 February 2023).

18 Minamore, "Black Men Walking: A Hilly Hike through 500 Years of Black British History." Cf. also Maxwell Ayamba, "Black Men Walking," *LANDSCAPE: The Journal of the Landscape Institute* (Summer 2018): 48–50.

19 See also *Flock Together*, the UK's first birdwatching collective for people of colour, founded by Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera, which states that "[f]or too long black, brown and POC have felt unwelcome and marginalised in spaces that should be for everyone. Together we are reclaiming green spaces and rebuilding our relationship with nature – one walk at a time." *Flock Together*, www.flocktogether.world (7 February 2023).

20 Minamore, "Black Men Walking: A Hilly Hike through 500 Years of Black British History."

21 Minamore, "Black Men Walking: A Hilly Hike through 500 Years of Black British History."

> When I think of my family, and of the first and second-generation immigrants I grew up with, I think of them on the move, never still, working second, third and fourth jobs. Perhaps that's why hill-walking felt so at odds with my blackness at first: this is walking without purpose. Going up then down, arriving in the same spot you left. [. . .] Or maybe there is a purpose, maybe there is something about finding yourself in the peaks, or finding the people who have come before you – the black and non-black people who built the country you continually try to claim as also being yours. Walking is a reclamation. Of moving slowly enough to say this is a land you can take your time with; these peaks are safe, I won't need to run.[22]

Despite the violent histories attached to black walking, there is a fundamental feeling of connection – to a place these men love and belong to, but in which they have often been overlooked or from which they have been actively expelled. The act of walking on and through land catches and refracts historical moments of forced and voluntary migration. But walking the land can also lead to feeling placed, and within the safe spaces of their walking group first- and second-generation immigrants get to know the(ir) land intimately, forging lasting community bonds with others and with the environment: this an affective knowledge, which plays out through black bodies in movement, black bodies in nature.

In this sense, black walking can be seen as intensely private and intimate act, straining to escape the politics of everyday racism, while also, perhaps paradoxically, constituting an overt political and communal act: the "unequal sense of freedom to walk – a consideration of the restrictions on walking relating to class, gender and ethnicity" links to "the power of collective walking to renegotiate traumatic histories and erasures and to effect forms of renewal and restoration."[23] In her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit provides historical parallels for this discussion of walking and its strategies of renegotiation, renewal and restoration. Delving into the context of British landownership, property rights and right-of-way debates, Solnit excavates a long history of the right to move freely through the land, especially in the North of England. As Solnit says about a turning point in the politics of walking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: "Thus came the great trespasses and walks that changed the face of the English countryside. They took place in the Peak District, where the laborers of the industrial north converged by foot, bicycle, and train during

22 Minamore, "Black Men Walking: A Hilly Hike through 500 Years of Black British History." In his poem "Black Walking," Jason Allen-Paisant pays tribute to Minamore's reflections (Allen-Paisant, *Thinking with Trees*, 29).

23 Anna Stenning and Pippa Marland, "Introduction," in *Walking, Landscape and Environment*, eds. David Borthwick, Pippa Marland and Anna Stenning (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020), 4.

their time off."[24] Angered by the claims of the landed gentry that their sprawling properties should be off limits for the public, the masses took not to the streets but to the hills and valleys and reclaimed the land: "by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in all parts of urban Britain, especially the industrial towns, the people's rambling movement was emerging, and gradually they began to take over the leadership of the struggles for access."[25] *Black Men Walking* harks back to this socialist movement, when working class ramblers and wanderers emerged and founded numerous clubs and associations for organised walking, clamouring for the right of "access and preservation."[26]

The real-life Yorkshire walking group, and the four fictional characters in *Black Men Walking* can be linked to this century-long fight for the right to land, adding the category of race to what was essentially a class struggle. Solnit succinctly points towards the transformative, revolutionary potential of walking: "[w]alking focuses not on the boundary lines of ownership that break the land into pieces but on the paths that function as a kind of circulatory system connecting the whole organism. Walking is, in this way, the antithesis of owning."[27] Walking not only "blurs and perforates the boundaries that define nations" but "postulates a mobile [. . .], shareable experience of the land."[28] As I will show in the following, the play itself transfers such a "shareable experience of the land" onto the page and onto the stage: both script and performance act as spaces for an imaginary re-enactment of migratory knowledge as the Yorkshire environment is pulled into the space of the theatre which is shared by players and audiences across England. I am interested in these processes of transferral, of migrating knowledge from one context to another, from one medium to another, from one bodily experience (the direct experience of walking through nature and the physical exertion accompanying that) to other kinds of sensual and affective experiences and knowledges, as actors on stage simulate walking and as readers and viewers of the play are transported into the spaces of the past.

24 Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Granta [2001] 2014), 164.
25 Howard Hill, *Freedom to Roam: The Struggle for Access to Britain's Moors and Mountains* (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1980), 24.
26 Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 167.
27 Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 162.
28 Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 162.

"Crash Stories Together": The Playscript of *Black Men Walking*

Asked about the process of writing *Black Men Walking*, Testament replied that what took form in conversations with Dawn Walton was a project that "presented an opportunity to dig through the crates of history, sample, remix, cut and crash stories together."[29] This act of "crashing together" materializes on different levels: on the level of plot as four black walkers from the twenty-first century share their individual stories of living in Britain as they collide with ghosts from the past; on the level of genre as the supernatural clashes with social realist modes; and on the level of language as lyrical, choral verse brushes up against colloquial urban slang and fast-paced spoken word poetry. "Crashing" suggests violence, but also something inherently energetic – the breaking apart of ossified structures as Black British genealogies converge with the here and now in the rural landscape of the Peak District. In *Black Men Walking*, histories jostle against each other, generating a new story.

We meet the protagonists of the play on a day when they should have called off their monthly walk in the Peaks due to unfavourable weather conditions. As it turns out, each of three men faces some kind of life crisis as they traverse the hills and valleys of Yorkshire's landscape – the oldest, 60-year-old Thomas, a historian and the son of a black Sheffield steelworker, is frustrated with his admin job as he yearns for a more vibrant connection to his ancestors. Matthew, a British Jamaican man in his early 50s, is a GP who has grown estranged from his wife and who spends most of the walk trying to text her instead of focusing on the route or his friends. 40-year-old Richard, a computer programmer who has recently migrated from Ghana, has trouble feeling at home in Britain and tries to alleviate his loneliness with his love for Star Trek and chocolate bars. And Ayeesha, who joins the three men towards the end of act one, is a 19-year-old student and artist with Caribbean heritage from Sheffield, who stumbles across the three men on their walk as she seeks respite in nature following a racist incident the night before in an "inner-city chicken shop."[30] "Together they walk, sing, chant, remember and occasionally argue. They consider themselves to be 'the black in the White Rose' and tell us they are 'walking out their identity.'"[31] Far from being a straight-forward, plot-heavy narrative though, the play deftly interweaves the

29 Testament, "Introduction," in *Black Men Walking* (London: Oberon Books, 2018), iv.

30 Testament, *Black Men Walking* (London: Oberon Books, 2018), 50.

31 Nick Hallissey, "Review: *Black Men Walking*," https://www.livefortheoutdoors.com/hot-stories/blackmenwalking, *Live for the Outdoors*, 6 March 2018 (23 June 2021).

realistic setting of the walking group's ramble with more supernatural elements. As the men tumble down a gorge in the fog and snow towards the end of the play, it is Ayeesha, imbued with fantastical strength, who is able to pull them back up.[32]

In fact, the story of the walking group is framed by, and interspersed with, a ghostly chorus of historical figures which pays tribute to long histories of black movement and migration that have shaped England even before it was known as such. Before we meet our protagonists, we are presented, on the first pages of the play, with the first of several so-called "ancestor poems", indicated in the stage directions as a "choral chant building to vocal breaths"[33] sung by the three actors for Thomas, Matthew and Richard, who intermittently take up the personae of the ancestors throughout the play:

> We walk
> We walk
> We walk
> We walk for freedom
> We walk for honour
> [. . .]
> We walk out our identity
> We walk for sanctuary
> We walk to claim this land
> We walk OUR land.[34]

With its repetitious, circuitous and plural "we walk," this is a collective poem of reclaiming the land, which entwines the voices of the three men who walk the Peak District with black people from the past who had similarly walked the hills:

> We walk in the footsteps of kings
> [. . .]
> Guildsmen
> Merchants
> Healers
> Emperors
> We are the past
> The future
> [. . .]
> Though we are written into the landscape you
> Don't see us
> We walked England before the English.[35]

32 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 75–76.
33 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 1.
34 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 1.
35 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 1–2.

This poly-vocal black history reaches beyond the commonly accepted timestamps of black migration to Britain: the transatlantic slave trade from the sixteenth century onwards, and the arrival of the MS Windrush in the early twentieth century.[36] The chorus thus acts as a reminder for readers and audience members of histories that surpass centuries of empire, the violence of Atlantic journeys and Caribbean plantations. As Dawn Walton explains, "I wanted something that moved us away from the idea that Black history was in one place, at one particular moment in time, something that was much more epic, that took in a span of history [. . .]."[37] To pay tribute to this all-encompassing and mobile sense of black history, in the dramatis personae list the ancestors are characterized as "The spirits of all the black people who have walked Yorkshire over the centuries / OR echoes in the landscape brough to life / OR the diverse essence of all the places we've come from, all we've brought with us and all we have made / OR something else."[38] Throughout the play, the ancestors' voices and stories interrupt and intervene in the walking group's paths. In total, the play presents seven ancestor "interludes", each titled "We Walk," which link in one way or other to the Yorkshire landscape. In the poem titled "We Walk Part Two," we encounter Septimius Severus, a North-African-born Roman emperor (193–211 AD) who significantly advanced the social and cultural progress of Yorkshire. As Thomas explains to Ayeesha, "after Septimius' death, his son made Eboracum – York, capital of the North of England. So really, if you think about it, it was an African that put the York in Yorkshire!"[39] In the third ancestor poem, we move to the Middle Ages and encounter John Moore, a wealthy black miller "who commissioned many of the millstones hewn at Stanage Edge and who bought the keys to the city of York with his wealth."[40] Other ancestors include, in

36 There are certain points in history that can be taken as markers of how power relations between empire and its (former) colonies shifted fundamentally and how these shifts reformed not only the political landscape, but also spatial, social and affective configurations. One of these notches in history was the arrival of the *Windrush*, "a moment paradoxically made possible by the British Nationality Act of 1948, which was in turn largely catalysed by Indian Independence in 1947" and which ushered in post-war immigration from the Caribbean, from the African continent and from South-East Asia. H. Adlai Murdoch, *Creolizing the Metropole* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 6.

37 Pippa Marland and Anna Stenning, "*Black Men Walking*: An interview with Dawn Walton and Testament," in *Walking, Landscape and Environment*, eds. David Borthwick, Pippa Marland and Anna Stenning (Abingdon and New York Routledge, 2020), 101.

38 Testament, "Characters," in *Black Men Walking* (London: Oberon Books, 2018), n. pag.

39 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 72.

40 Hallissey, "Review: *Black Men Walking*."

"We Walk Part 4," Pablo Fanque, a famous nineteenth-century equestrian performer and England's first black circus proprietor, and, in the fifth poem, the ivory-bangled lady, an African noblewoman from Roman York, "whose remains, dated to the second half of the fourth century, were found with jet and elephant ivory bracelets, earrings, pendants, beads, a blue glass jug and a glass mirror."[41]

All these historical figures made Northern England their home or have links to it, in one way or another. The ancestors and their songs make evident, bring into the present, Britain's black past. By crashing together long-forgotten migratory black histories with the four protagonists' present, the play speaks forcefully to the difficulties continuously faced by black people in the countryside and to the resistant act of walking the land. The ancestor poem focusing on the military might of emperor Septimius Severus, for example, is paired with a scene in which Thomas, Matthew and Richard encounter the police: while the officers, ostensibly, merely warn them of the bad weather, the encounter leaves a bitter taste behind. The men consequently discuss everyday racism, micro-aggressions and the way white people meet them with "a sense of suspiciousness,"[42] as well as the racist bias of media outlets and the vague but pervasive sense of threat felt by black people when faced with white police: "It's that feeling in't it?"[43] Interestingly, the actual conversation between the men and the officers is not relayed in the play: the moment of "confrontation" is replaced by Septimius Severus' ancestor poem, which states, "through treacherous lands / we walk with purpose / we walk with an army," (22) and which describes the emperor as "commander of nations." (23) When his troops encounter "remnants of the [. . .] tribes not yet relented," the "British savage," (23) he mounts an attack to beat them back. The encounter with the police in the present time, which leaves our black protagonists uneasy, finds its immediate echo in a portrayal of the African emperor and his military powers quashing resistance by indigenous (white) Caledonians in the 200s AD. This "crashing together" of past and present in the Peak District can be read as an oblique yet effective comment on the often-perilous experience of black people in rural environments and, simultaneously, as

41 "Ivory Bangle Lady," https://www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/collections/collections-highlights/ivory-bangle-lady/, *Yorkshire Museum* (1 March 2022).

42 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 25.

43 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 25. For further discussion of racial terror in *Black Men Walking*, cf. Michael Pearce, "'Though we are written into the landscape you don't see us' (Testament, 2018). Black Faces in White Spaces: Whiteness as Terror and the Terror of Un-belonging in *Black Men Walking*," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Race*, eds. Tiziana Morosetti and Osita Okagbue (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 327–348.

a counterargument to their sense of being in the wrong place as the presence of a powerful black historical ruler is invoked via the ancestor poem.[44]

A distinct sense of locality holds together the different time periods and worlds presented on the page. As the first ancestor poem lets us know, in what can be read as a place-based, Yorkshire-specific manifesto:

> We walk over the same waters
> Across the Ouse
> The Rother
> The Ure
> The Aire
> Derwent
> Mouth open to foreign sons
> Become freshwater [. . .]
>
> Walking upon stone
> Quartz
> Jet
> Mica
> Feldspar
> Knuckles cracked white and ashy
> Stones in the drywall
> Millstones to the mill[45]

As Pippa Marland and Anna Stenning point out, "the script reveals a strong connection with the actual earth of the Yorkshire/Derbyshire borders – 'the dales, the moors, the peaks, the vale' – and its rivers and rocks."[46] In that sense, the play is "geographically and geologically precise," portraying "the moors above Grindleford, a long and ancient Roman road, the lush hollows of Padley Gorge and more."[47] References to Yorkshire's landscape permeate almost every scene

44 Another, perhaps more subtle link between past and the present is presented with the "crashing together" of the bangled lady and Ayeesha. The ivory-bangled lady, the fourth-century "African princess," appears in "We Walk Part 5", the first ancestor poem to interrupt the play once the three men have met Ayeesha and Ayeesha has related her story in a contemporary rap piece in act two. The adornments worn by the bangled lady, ivory bracelets and gemstones (Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 66–67), directly translate to Ayeesha, who is enrolled in a metalwork and jewellery studies course. (58) The "decision to have Ayeesha appear in initial scenes as an ancient African woman that only Thomas can see [shows] us the shared history of these characters." Cf. Nabilah Said, "Review: *Black Men Walking* at the Royal Court." http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/review-black-men-walking-royal-court/, *Exeunt Magazine*, 26 March 2018 (7 February 2023).
45 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 2–3.
46 Marland and Stenning, "*Black Men Walking*: An interview with Dawn Walton and Testament," 109.
47 Hallissey, "Review: *Black Men Walking*."

and song the play presents – the ivory bangled lady is decked out in jewellery made not only of African ivory, but also of "Jet gemstone from Whitby on the / Yorkshire coast";[48] the millstones quarried in Yorkshire by the black miller John Moore have become entangled with their natural surroundings, an ecosystem evolved over centuries: "A millstone. / See, it's become part of that tree . . . / the roost have grown all over –."[49] The play can be read, in the words of Testament, as "an attempt to embrace the imprint we find here in the earth, hold it in tension and grow from it."[50]

The vales and rivers of the Peak District, as they become enmeshed with the crashing of stories and experiences throughout the text, evoke an embodied, affective knowledge of the land, laying bare deep layers of history. The play presents a group of black people walking the land as they grow conscious of their right to be there and become aware of how this right might be denied by white others. The material wealth of Yorkshire's landscape, its geological and ecological reality, is thus posed against the power structures of empire which undeniably infuse the hills and shorelines of England's green (un)pleasant lands. As Homi Bhabha has posited, "memories of the 'deep' nation crafted in chalk and limestone; the quilted downs; the moors menaced by the wind; the quiet cathedral towns; that corner of a foreign field that is forever England" can be interrupted and subverted by alternative, affective geographies as imagined by a play such as *Black Men Walking*: the "imaginative geographies that spanned countries and empires are changing; those imagined communities that played on the unisonant boundaries of the nation are singing with different voices."[51] The play mediates a knowledge of the past that is deeply embodied and rooted in Yorkshire's landscape and its contemporary realities of migration. By working against the widespread "amnesia about the countryside's black histories" and by challenging "the assumption that black people have no historical relationship with the countryside and refute the idea that white people more naturally belong to it,"[52] *Black Men Walking* foregrounds the productive tensions that emerge at the intersection of imagining and experiencing, or knowing, migration, past and present.

48 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 66–67.

49 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 70.

50 Testament, "Introduction", iv.

51 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, [1994] 2004), 243; for further discussions of Bhabha's concept of the "deep nation," see Jennifer Leetsch, *Love and Space in Contemporary Women's Writing: Making Love, Making Worlds* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 159.

52 Fowler, "The Rural Turn in Contemporary Writing by Black and Asian Britons," 404.

"We Walk": Performance, Audiences and the New Rural

How is this re-enactment of migratory knowledge, this "imaginative geography" of Black Britain, pulled from the page onto the stage and into theatre spaces across England? The following section, which moves from the playscript to the stage performance of *Black Men Walking*, concerns the processes of migrating knowledge from one context to another, from one medium to another, from one bodily experience to other kinds of sensual and affective experiences and knowledges, as actors on stage simulate walking and as viewers of the play are transported into the spaces of the past. How do stage design, dramaturgy and choreography express notions of movement and migration? What are the challenges of setting a play about movement and walking in nature in the static and enclosed space of a playhouse? What opportunities and critical counter-positions does the play's insistent focus on Black British rurality provide?

As described above, the Yorkshire landscape plays an important part in relaying the black walkers' immersion into England's past. It is no surprise, then, that the play's simple yet effective stage design reflects this intense focus on natural surroundings. The play's mise-en-scène is designed by the artist Simon Kelly, who homes in on the materiality of the Peak District National Park. Landscape is not conveyed as abstract, or as metonymically standing in for belonging, but is materially rendered, made alive on the stage. As Dawn Walton describes, "in Simon Kelly's beautiful design, there was this kind of earth strata at the back, which symbolises a connection with the land – and with that land over time – and greenery and millstones [remnants of nineteenth-century corn milling in the area]. There was also a gradient in the walk – an uphill and downhill bit and two layers."[53] The set consists of a strip of greenery, made of plants and grass, and a backdrop which runs around the stage and which evokes not only geological layers of rock but also the layers of history that are excavated throughout the play, "a visual image of the generations that have walked the land before our time."[54] Lighting director Lee Curran's mist, which creeps in as our protagonists become increasingly lost on their route, adds not only a captivating meteorological dimension to the Yorkshire landscape as it manifests on the stage, but also

53 Marland and Stenning, "*Black Men Walking*: An interview with Dawn Walton and Testament," 102. Addition in square brackets in original.

54 Aleks Sierz, "*Black Men Walking*, Royal Court review – inspiring and exhilarating," https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/black-men-walking-royal-court-review-inspiring-and-exhilarating, *The Arts Desk*, 23 March 2018 (7 February 2023).

accentuates the porousness and liminality of a play script that continuously oscillates between different historical epochs.

Like its stage design, the play's intricate choreography underlines the impetus to render migration, and its histories, tangible. The stage, a curved platform, resembles the incline of the hills the actors walk up and down, just as if they were hiking. Both setting and plot come alive by the constant movement conveyed by the actors. The walking performed by the actors relies on mime techniques, and they often move arms and leg up and down on the spot. This is based on the actors' work with Steve Medlin, the play's movement director and a physical theatre artist who was trained in Jacques Lecoq's early twentieth-century mime techniques. As Revolution Mix was developing the piece, they

> wanted the characters to do the real walk in almost real time [. . .]. But because they have to be able to talk and walk at the same time, we needed a technique, needed to create something that looked really realistic, but didn't use all their energy. [. . .] They would use very basic, very simple physical theatre techniques to create the illusion of a stile, gates and so on. All those mechanisms just became part of the language of the piece.[55]

Telling *Black Men Walking*'s story through physical movement, the "subtle twitches and the hastening and lengthening of breath,"[56] it is made clear for audiences, even without them having read the playscript and stage directions, when exactly the group is "struggling up a gritstone tor in the wind" and "when they are just bumbling along a Roman road at bantering speed."[57] The miming never seems exaggerated or alienating, and instead of falling out of the fictional world created by the play, the audience is pulled in further to accompany Thomas (played by Tyrone Huggins) Matthew (Trevor Laird), Richard (Tonderai Munyevu) and Ayeesha (Dorcas Sebuyange) through Yorkshire's landscapes as they discover their black ancestors who had migrated to and made Britain their temporary or permanent home.

In fact, the play's level of audience immersion is one of the most important factors in how *Black Men Walking*'s stage performance is able to transpose a sense of knowable and imaginable migratory realities. What I have begun to outline in my analysis of the play's dramatic text becomes even clearer when turning to the implications of immediate, embodied artistic representation that grows out of audience interaction and engagement. One of the creators' dramaturgical strategies was to use a mirror in certain scenes of the play:

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55 Marland and Stenning, "*Black Men Walking*: An interview with Dawn Walton and Testament," 102.

56 Hallissey, "Review: *Black Men Walking*."

57 Hallissey, "Review: *Black Men Walking*."

> Because I [Dawn Walton] wanted it to feel like these histories just came through time and land, we used the device of a mirror, so that when you lit it differently, you could suddenly see through it, and you could see that the history characters in the play came out from this mirror [. . .]. Also, when you light it in certain ways, the audience can see themselves in it, and indeed each other – you can see other members of the audience, so there's that sense that 'we're all in this' as opposed to it being just something you come to as a voyeur.[58]

Through the device of a mirror, which grows opaque or see-through in turns, the simultaneity of past and present is once more underlined. The mirror also breaks the fourth wall, which elicits both immersion and reflection. The mirror opens up a view of the self that is unfamiliar; it may reflect the players, or the ancestors, or oneself, so that a stable or continuous sense of identity within the space and time-frame of the performance is subverted. The fact that the audience can see one another in a mirror that reflects back the space of the theatre beyond the stage and the fictional story-world, opposes a purely voyeuristic, perhaps impassive, theatre going experience, and instead suggests something more involved. It may produce a feeling of belonging and of community for a (black) audience member. The audience is thus implicated in the play between alienation and identification that unfolds on the stage as four black characters walk the land.[59] This becomes perhaps most evident in the very last ancestor poem whose chorus rises as the play closes, and which implicates the twenty-first-century, theatre-going crowd with its explicit references, not to the Middle Ages or Roman times, but to everyday realities and lived experiences of Britain's black population:

> And we walk
> Walking
> Walking in the footsteps of
> The sales assistant
> The student
> The teachers
> The person in the chicken shop
> Everyone in the place tonight!

58 Marland and Stenning, "*Black Men Walking*: An interview with Dawn Walton and Testament," 102–103.

59 For a perspective which outlines the possible space of critical reflection opened up for white audience members, c.f. Pearce, who argues that "[. . .] there is the potential for audience member [sic] to be made aware of their role as spectators and its relationship to the white gaze." (2021, 343) I want to take this moment to acknowledge my own position as a white theatre goer when I saw this play in London in 2018, and as a white researcher writing about it. The mirror on stage forces me to reflect on my own subjective locatedness and my own conditions of mobility, on who migrates and who is allowed to dwell as I am, without being confronted with hate and rejection, as a privileged white German woman.

That person sat next to you!
Breathing in a thousand histories[60]

The specificity of audience, scale and location of *Black Men Walking* and its reception contexts is important to consider for a play that pushes to the foreground critical engagement with the British countryside and complicated notions of belonging for Black Britons. Just like Ingrid Pollard's photographic subject ponders her fraught existence in Wordsworth's Lake District, the protagonists of *Black Men Walking* struggle to name their place in England's green (un)pleasant lands. The character who is most critical of the walking group's right to move through nature is Ayeesha, who asks, when she first encounters the three men: "Black people really live in the cities, innit though? Countryside's not for us. I don't get it . . ."[61] In the end, she is the one who embodies the black ancestors' strength (or, as the stage directions indicate: "The Spirits of the Ancestors fill Ayeesha"), to pull up her three male companions from a steep gorge, ultimately saving their lives.[62]

As mentioned in the introduction, Eclipse Theatre is one of the few, black-led British theatre companies running today. Michael Pearce outlines that "[t]he fact that the company is based in Sheffield also provides an important counterpoint to the plethora of black theatre and performance activity that occurs in London."[63] The company "was created with the intention of touring black theatre to middle-scale regional theatres" such as for example in Leeds, Nottingham or Sheffield, and to bring specifically black art to rural audiences.[64] In her work on rurality in contemporary post-Brexit British theatre, Gemma Edwards diagnoses a "rural turn," a more or less "conscious move to consider the rural geographies, histories, and experiences that have been repeatedly marginalised from both theatre buildings and political discourse" as a direct consequence of the EU referendum.[65] Aware of the potential of a growing interest in rural geographies in theatre and performance for public and political discourse,[66] she references Jo Robinson in *Theatre and the Rural* who proclaims that theatre "could have a key role to play in both producing

60 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 79.
61 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 43.
62 Testament, *Black Men Walking*, 75.
63 Pearce, "'Though we are written into the landscape you don't see us,'" 331.
64 Pearce, "'Though we are written into the landscape you don't see us,'" 331.
65 Gemma Edwards, "Small Stories, Local Places: A Place-Oriented Approach to Rural Crises," *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* 8.1 (2020): 73. Edwards, however, also points "to a longer trajectory of rural plays on the contemporary London stage which reach much further than the post-Brexit turn that theatre-makers and reviewers have recently identified. [. . .] this current interest in rural place must be seen as part of a longer tradition." (73).
66 Edwards, "Small Stories, Local Places," 74.

and potentially changing understandings of the rural, challenging dominant views of the relationships between urban and rural which can affect the political, social and cultural lives of the nation."[67] Applied to a play like *Black Men Walking*, which speaks to specifically black rural audiences and explicitly tours not only London but is geared towards houses in Northern England, the rural tun in theatre not only illuminates the tension between urban centres and the rural "periphery," but also how "performances about and in the rural local can offer an alternative way into staging our increasingly dislocated nation."[68] For *Black Men Walking*, such an alternative way might lie in refusing the pull of the elitist metropole and in instead celebrating the local while never disregarding global histories of migration as they come alive through an insistent and inventive engagement with Yorkshire's landscapes.

Concluding Thoughts: "Black Futures in Nature and the Environment"

In my analyses of both playscript and performance, I have outlined how a play like *Black Men Walking* can transfer migratory knowledge onto the stage, pulling Yorkshire's rural environments into the space of theatres shared by players and audiences across England. As knowledges of Britain's migratory past and present are moved from one context to another, from one medium to another, from one bodily experience to another, *Black Men Walking* turns the outdoors, a highly contested space of exclusion, into a possible space to acquire knowledge of the land and to engage in acts of cultural and imaginative geography that transform rural Britain, thus working against the "positioning of the Black body always outside of land."[69] This is a form of theatre intimately connected to localised and geographically specific black ecologies, that is, systems of connection and relation which interweave land, migration and black identity. Such ecologies are facilitated and mediated by the play's strategies of continuously merging and crashing stories together; strategies of interconnection and simultaneity enacted by both text and performance. As theatre scholar Theresa J. May has succinctly posited, "always an immediate, communal and material encounter among embodied performer, audience and place, theatre is ecological even as it is representational,"

67 Jo Robinson, *Theatre and the Rural* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19–20.
68 Edwards, "Small Stories, Local Places," 80.
69 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag.

addressing "injustices felt in the body – the body of experience, of community, of land."[70] *Black Men Walking*, a community-oriented and epoch-spanning story of Britain's migratory black population, redresses injustices by activating the rural environment as a visitable, inhabitable past for black Britons.

In the coda to his 2021 essay "On Blackness and Landscape: Reclaiming Time," Jason Allen-Paisant asks "how does a black history of exclusion from land influence how we think about black futures in nature and the environment?"[71] For him, the answer to that question and others about black futures in nature lies in the convivial, communal potential of creating art. As Allen-Paisant posits, art offers alternative spaces of imagination, while also always being about "togetherness, community."[72] Creative migration imaginaries, such as proffered by *Black Men Walking*, point towards a solidary future "in which humanness becomes a matter of connection [. . .]. And if solidarity involves connection to the more than human world, then it is also, necessarily, connection amongst ourselves."[73] *Black Men Walking* reimagines the nation as connected, its four first- and second-generation immigrants walking the land to gain a deeply embodied, affective knowledge of its histories. With its pronounced focus on the characters' walking and rambling movements, the play offers a creative, artistic reflection of place-based experiences in nature. Through articulating and activating affective attachment to memory and landscape, the play ultimately poses the argument that "nature embodies the past, that landscapes – both (re-)imagined and actual ones – are capable of resurrecting histories of people, places, and events."[74] *Black Men Walking* is an intervention into environment and historiography, revealing the long history of Black Britain's migrational contexts and fault lines while also never ceasing to look towards, as Allen-Paisant would say, black futures in nature.

70 Theresa J. May, "Greening the Theater: Taking Ecocriticism from Page to Stage," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 7.1 (Fall 2005): 86.

71 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag.

72 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag.

73 Allen-Paisant, "Reclaiming Time: On Blackness and Landscape," n. pag.

74 Angela Michele Leonard, "Goin' to Nature to Reach Double Consciousness: A Du Boisian Methodological Journey to Graves of the Formerly Enslaved," *Journal of Ecocriticism* 1.2 (July 2009): 78.

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Jennifer Leetsch, Frederike Middelhoff and Miriam Wallraven

Chapter 15
Concluding Remarks: (Strange) Migratory Encounters

> Thinking about how we might work with, and speak to, others, or how we may inhabit the world with others, involves imagining a different form of political community, one that moves beyond the opposition between common and uncommon, between friends and strangers, or between sameness and difference.[1]

We want to take these brief concluding remarks as a chance to gather up some of the threads unspooled in our introduction and woven throughout our contributors' chapters, and to critically reflect on a project that aims to understand the configurations of migration in literature, art and media across time and space. Throughout the chapters that make up this volume, migration knowledges and imaginaries have emerged as an entangled analytic to understand social, political and affective relations: indeed, as Alicia Schmidt Camacho, who we cite in our introduction, has pointed out, "the repertory of symbolic representation and practices that constitute cultural life may exert material force in the everyday existence of a people."[2] Migration movements have reconfigured our world in important ways, and it is crucial to not only assess cross-cultural varieties of migration imaginaries, but to also unravel conflicting knowledges about migration. The contributors to this book have taken to heart this call: By intertwining discussions about migration imaginaries and migration knowledges, they have given us ways to think about local and global configurations of migration as fused with specific aesthetics and media practices. But it is just as important to identify the potential dangers of thinking, writing and knowing about migration from an academic standpoint that runs danger of losing itself in abstract scrutiny.

In light of the refugee- and migrant-responsive art and scholarship that has increased significantly over the last decades, we agree with Emma Cox, Sam Durrant, David Farrier, Lyndsey Stonebridge and Agnes Woolley who caution us to think about not only the figuration of migration in art and literature, but about the configuration of migration on all levels of knowledge production and circulation: "it

1 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 180.

2 Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 5.

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has never been more urgent to ask what the relationship is between audiences and consumers, or whose interests are served by the audiencing of refugee arts."[3] The audience of refugee and migrant art, and critical scholarship addressing the same, is implicated in broader, perhaps largely implicit, frames of norms and interests that need to be made explicit if an honest conversation about the interplay of migrant imaginaries and knowledges is to be had. As Cox et al. ask:

> How are we to reconcile the fact that the empathetic, imaginative engagement sought by a good deal of artistic work may be short-lived (albeit intense) and institutionally circumscribed? [. . .] To what extent is narrative representation yoked to a humanitarian paradigm concerned with demonstrating the fundamental value of the other's humanity, but which may obviate other ways of perceiving (politically, economically, ecologically) the other's predicament?[4]

In other words, when we speak about how the arts and humanities tangle with political engagement and civic responsibility in the face of oppression and racism, we also need to illuminate the shadowy side of possible epistemic privilege and violence that goes hand in hand with such engagement. While the naming, analysing and perhaps even the attempt to overcome unequal and asymmetrical power dynamics may be at the heart of activist and academic practices, what is often shrouded is the broader implication of "audiencing" as effected by migration arts. The audience is implicated by way of empathy felt and insight gained: as we have outlined in our introduction, art or fiction about migration and refugeehood can, and should, as a lot of people would argue, evoke feelings of compassion and understanding. But in contexts of migration knowledge productions, which this edited volume has attempted to tackle, a critical extension of this question is needed, asking if the consumption of migrant-oriented or refugee-responsive art can act as a screen for left-leaning audiences to remain unresponsive within a passive space of emotional engagement and to deflect calls to action: "sympathy becomes part of the machinery."[5] We thus need to remain attuned to, and responsible of, the complex and complicated interplay between fiction, aesthetics and politics. Responsiveness and responsibility need to be thought together, while not being conflated; this is the crux of bringing together imaginations of and knowledges about migration through fiction, art and media within the institutional(ising) space of a scholarly edited volume in a book series published by a global-player publishing house.

3 Emma Cox, Sam Durrant, David Farrier, Lyndsey Stonebridge and Agnes Woolley, "Introduction," in *Refugee Imaginaries: Research Across the Humanities*, eds. Emma Cox et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 5.

4 Cox et al., "Introduction," 5–6.

5 Sara Ahmed, "Travelling with Strangers," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 42.1 (2021): 14.

In these reflections we are reminded of Sara Ahmed's path-breaking work on strange encounters which we quote from at the outset of these concluding remarks. In *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000), Ahmed traces the figure of the stranger, and how the stranger and the non-stranger become co-constitutive of one another. As Vince Marotta concisely summarises in a recent special issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Ahmed's book,

> the marginalized stranger becomes the object of knowledge while the "professional stranger" becomes the subject of knowledge. Such cross-cultural collaboration, rather than promoting dialogue and an ethical relationality, acts to "conceal the operation of an epistemic difference and division."[6]

When the stranger pushes at the limits of understanding, as "that which exceeds 'our' knowledge,"[7] acts of representation, i.e., subjecting the stranger to representation (figuring the stranger into an object *to be known*), can all too easily veer into the territory of overrepresentation. As Ahmed argues at the outset of her book with regard to the figure of the stranger: "The fantasy of aliens who are too close to home expands rather than threatens our knowledge: the possibility that aliens could be nearby requires that we invent new ways of telling the difference, new forms of detection, better practices of surveillance."[8] Knowledge can be dangerous, overdetermined and misguided by the desire to control, to figure, to categorise. The desire to identify or to name reveals a panoptical desire to have clear-cut answers, to have distinctly demarcated boundaries, and to leave the sphere of uncertainty, liminality and ambiguity. Especially in an academic context where an institutionalised system of knowledge acquisition and production (and circulation) sets the discursive frame, it is difficult but necessary to continue reflections and conversations about the problems of representation: over-representation, hyper-visibility and conflation. And as Ahmed warns us of transforming the stranger into a fetish, we want to address and acknowledge our subject positions as white editors – privileged with multiple forms of social and cultural capital – of a volume concerned with but perhaps also inadvertently conflating many different experiences, representations and interpretations of migration. The ambivalent status of being both entrenched in the very power structures producing and channelling knowledge about transnational migration and analysing these structures and knowledges at the same time is ineluctable. To include voices and views transcending Western comfort zones, from

6 Vince Marotta, "Meeting Again: Reflections on *Strange Encounters* 20 Years On," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 42.1 (2021): 4; quoting from Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 60 and 67.

7 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 1.

8 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 2.

various fields and backgrounds – within and beyond academia – was thus a great concern in the conception and development of this book. As editors, we are grateful for having the privilege to work on questions of migration, exile and displacement, while not being subjected to very same realities these questions belie. Contributing to the field of migration studies, it is also our responsibility to point out that there are many voices and perspectives we have not been able to make part of our book.

For Ahmed, one way to work against this epistemic violence is by foregrounding the encounter: the encounter becomes a site and a mode where problems become visible. Anita Mannur reflects on this simultaneity when positing that the strange encounter imparts "the enabling possibility of coming into contact with strangers" while also disclosing the "latent violence of the encounter with the stranger."[9] An encounter is a "meeting which involves surprise and conflict" and that shifts "the boundaries of the familiar, of what we assume that we know."[10] By attending to the configurations of encounters, with and through migration, this edited volume has brought together many different approaches to, readings of and contexts on imagining and knowing migration across media – pinpointing both surprising and conflicting configurations in a variety of unexpected ways. Working against the concealment of difference, what emerge are forms and figurations of migration not brought or thought together under the singularity of one name or one experience – the chapters, in sum, insist, instead, on plurivocality, heterogeneity and divergences despite the disciplinary and generic bounds of a scholarly edited volume such as this. As Ahmed argues, the encounter allows "the 'one' to be faced and to face others, [it] is not a meeting between already constituted subjects who know each other: rather, the encounter is premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or to predict its outcome."[11] The admittance of not knowing, of being unable to know in all totality, can pave the way for a more equal encounter between one and other.

As the contributors to this volume show, art and literature can bear witness to how the various "makings of" the migrant via classification and ordering processes of state, law, bureaucracy and, yes, academia, jostle against knowledges about migration by migrants themselves who insistently foreground migratory subjectivity, agency and creativity. The encounters in this book are encounters between migrant imaginaries and knowledges – they are mediated, configured, embodied or performed; they are fragmented, partial and ongoing; unpredictable

9 Anita Mannur, "Matter Out of Place: The Legacy of *Strange Encounters* in Asian American Studies," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 42.1 (2021): 116.

10 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 6–7.

11 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 8.

and conflict-laden, intimate and alienating. These encounters are also reflected on the structural meta-level of this book. While the volume has been divided up into three separate sections, the chapters in these sections speak to one another across disciplinary, geographical and historical boundaries: for example, both Arghavan and Leetsch consider migration's environmental impetus while foregrounding very different political registers; Popoola and Kabir are linked by their focus on affective embodiment even though the former draws on the Mediterranean as a transitional space between Europe and Africa, while the latter focusses on the connectivities between the Atlantic and Indian oceans; Middelhoff, Bal and Coffineau are all concerned with the power of images and imagery about migration, although they engage with different temporal and medial contexts: the image of the staunch, distinguished Huguenot *réfugié* is met by the power asymmetries at play in visualising refugees today. Kapusuz's and Wallraven's contributions are similarly concerned with the effects of war, but one focuses on the medium of film and the other on the written memoir; Landvreugd and Dogramaci both think about the space of the home – one holding Suriname and the Netherlands, the other housing Turkey and Germany at the same time.

All of our contributions, standing on their own as well as in concert with one another, have analysed migrant imaginaries as entangled with migrant knowledges, and the other way round, as configuring our social and political sphere – acts of artistic creation, be they cinematic, documentary, literary or theatrical, point towards but also complicate societal epistemic regimes. The manifold encounters as discussed throughout this book speak of production and reception processes that brush against one another: while this edited volume will unavoidably entail gaps and extractive logics, there is also the unexpected, the unassuming, the refusal to heed a singular interpretation, present in the pages preceding our concluding remarks. Imagining a political community that foregrounds encounter, as the opening quotation from Ahmed's *Strange Encounters* suggests, is bound up with modes of responsiveness, responsibility and relationality that need to be approached as co-constitutive: "The differences between us necessitate the dialogue, rather than disallow it – a dialogue must take place, precisely *because* we don't speak the same language."[12] We hope this volume has offered one such possible dialogue.

12 Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 180.

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Notes on Contributors

Mahmoud Arghavan is an independent scholar-activist from Iran residing in Munich. He completed his PhD in American Studies at FU Berlin in 2013. Since 2016 he has been working as coordinator for the Unit of Aid for Refugees, Migration, and Integration at Diakonie Munich. His research interests include Diaspora Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Critical Race Theory, Border Studies, Global Warming and Climate Refugees. He has co-edited the volume *Who Can Speak and Who Is Heard/Hurt?: Facing Problems of Race, Racism, and Ethnic Diversity in the Humanities in Germany* (transcript, 2019).

Mieke Bal is a cultural theorist, critic, video artist and curator, who works in cultural analysis: on gender, migratory culture, psychoanalysis and the critique of capitalism. Her 46 books include a trilogy on political art. *Image-Thinking* argues for the integration of artmaking and intellectual analysis, and past and present.

Léa Coffineau is a PhD student in anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). Her research focuses on colonial debt and the question of reparations in contemporary France and in relationship with the country's former colonised territories in West and Central Africa. She also uses documentary filmmaking as a research method and as an alternative outlet of knowledge distribution.

Katrin Dennerlein is lecturer at the University of Würzburg. She is currently working as project leader of the computational literary studies project "Emotions in Drama" where she explores emotions with traditional philological as well as computational methods. She is the author of *Narratologie des Raumes* (De Gruyter, 2009) and co-edited the volume *Räume der Herkunft* (De Gruyter, 2016). Her research on space and mobility centers on Döblin and Kafka, on recent German (post)colonial novels and on medical spaces in German twentieth-century novels.

Burcu Dogramaci is professor at the Institute for Art History at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich with a focus on the twentieth century and contemporary art. Her research areas are: exile, migration and flight; urbanity and architecture; photography; textile modernism; live art; history of art history. She led the ERC Consolidator Project, "Relocating Modernism: Global Metropolises, Modern Art and Exile (METROMOD)" (2017–2023), https://metromod.net. Since 2021 she has been co-director of the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect, https://www.globaldisconnect.org.

Ananya Jahanara Kabir is Professor of English Literature at King's College London, and the winner of the Infosys Prize for the Humanities (2017) and the Humboldt Research Prize (2018). She is the author of *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* and *Partition's Post-Amnesias: 1947, 1971, and Modern South Asia*. She is currently writing her next book, *Alegropolitics: Connecting on the AfroModern Dance Floor*. Her new research project is on Creole Indias.

Hayriye Kapusuz has a PhD in Media Studies. Her research interests include media reception studies, film aesthetics and media literacy. She is currently a research assistant in the DFG-funded project "media/rep/" at Philipps University of Marburg. In addition to her academic work, she offers support in the field of media literacy in child and youth welfare and conducts media courses at secondary schools.

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Charl Landvreugd advocates for local continental European concepts and languages that have the potential to speak about the sensibilities specific to the area when it comes to the production of Cultural Citizenship. Using a broad range of artistic disciplines, he applies the results of his research to think about citizenship and belonging and how this is expressed in the visual arts in continental Europe. He holds a PhD from the Royal College of Art in London. Among other activities he currently serves as the Head of Research and Curatorial Practice at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Jennifer Leetsch is postdoctoral researcher at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, where she is currently working on a project which connects black life writing to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ecologies. Her first book on contemporary Afro-diasporic women's writing appeared with Palgrave in 2021, and she has published work in, among others, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *EJES: The European Journal of English Studies*, *JALA: Journal of the African Literature Association* and *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*.

Frederike Middelhoff is Associate Professor of Modern German Literature with a focus on Romanticism Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt (since March 2020). Her research is focused on the interplay between science, knowledge, literary fiction and cultural practices in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. She has published widely within the field of animal studies, plant studies and ecocriticism as well as on mobilities around 1800. Sie is currently preparing her second book on migration in German Romantic literature and culture.

Olumide Popoola is a Nigerian-German novelist and writer who has authored several books, most recently the novel *When We Speak of Nothing*. She holds a PhD in creative writing and lectures in creative writing as well as leading and teaching on writing schemes for emerging writers. Her creative and teaching practice is particularly concerned with change-making. She is Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins where she co-designed the PGCert Writing for Change.

Heike Raphael-Hernandez is Associate Professor of American Studies at the Julius-Maximilians-University of Würzburg, Germany. Among her research interest are Black Atlantic studies; global south diasporas; German involvement in transatlantic slavery; migration and visual culture. Some of her recent publications are "The 'New' Hollywood and Beyond: Women, Migration, and Cultural Victimhood" in *Women and Migration(s)* (eds. Kalia Brooks, Cheryl Finley, Ellyn Toscano and Deborah Willis, 2022) and *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture* (2017, co-edited with Leigh Raiford).

Miriam Wallraven is Associate Professor at Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, where she teaches English Literature and Cultural Studies. She has published widely, for instance on gender studies and feminism, genre theories, and religious and esoteric cultures in literature. She is currently working on her third book-length study on literatures of migration and displacement in a globalised world with a particular focus on English-speaking texts from and about the Balkans.

Kai Wiegandt is Professor of Literature at the Barenboim-Said Akademie Berlin. His research interests include postcolonial and migration literature. He is the author of *J. M. Coetzee's Revisions of the Human: Posthumanism and Narrative Form* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and has edited *The Transnational in Literary Studies: Potential and Limitations of a Concept* (De Gruyter, 2020). His articles have appeared in journals such as *Ariel*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and *Poetica*.

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