







*Mobile Culture Studies.*  
*The Journal*

Vol. 4 2018

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Version Online March 2019





*Mobile Culture Studies.  
The Journal*

Vol. 4 2018    **Künstlerische Positionen und Ausdrucksformen  
zum Thema Mobilität und Migration**  
Artistic positions and representations  
of mobility and migration

Edited by Joachim Schlör and Johanna Rolshoven

*Joachim Schlör und Johanna Rolshoven*

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# Künstlerische Positionen und Ausdrucksformen zum Thema Mobilität und Migration

## Editorial

Joachim Schlör und Johanna Rolshoven

Im August 2017 sorgte der Plan einer Theateraufführung im Rahmen der Kasseler Documenta 14 für Diskussionen: „Auschwitz on the Beach“, eine Performance der italienischen Künstler Franco Bifo Berardi und Sim Sampaio.<sup>1</sup> Ist es zulässig, das Schicksal der Migranten unserer Gegenwart in einen Bezug zum Holocaust zu bringen? Ist Kunst dafür der geeignete Rahmen? Die Empörung war groß, und vielleicht auch verständlich, und die Aufführung wurde abgesagt. Damit ist aber natürlich keine Frage beantwortet, nicht die nach der Qualität des Stücks, nicht die nach der Zulässigkeit historischer Vergleiche, und noch weniger die allgemeinere Frage, wie überhaupt Ereignisse und Erfahrungen von Migration – und anderen Formen von Mobilität – in den Künsten, in Literatur, Musik, Bildender Kunst, auch in neueren popkulturellen Zugängen, interpretiert und repräsentiert werden können. Diese Fragen standen am Beginn der Vorbereitungen für die vierte Ausgabe unserer *Mobile Culture Studies*.

Nach den bisherigen Ausgaben zu den Themen „Die Schiffsreise – The Sea Voyage“, „Forced Mobilities, New Moorings“, und „Migration et Ambience“ luden wir zur Einreichung von Artikeln ein, die im weiten Sinne künstlerische Positionen und Ausdrucksformen zum Thema Mobilität und Migration aus alltagskultureller und populärkultureller Perspektive vorstellen, untersuchen und analysieren. Gerade im Bereich der Alltagskultur und der populären Kultur werden künstlerische Positionen und Produktionen, etwa in der Fotografie und im Film, zur Auseinandersetzung mit historischen wie gegenwärtigen Formen von Mobilität eingesetzt. Aber auch in den traditionellen künstlerischen Formen wie dem Theater, der Literatur und der bildenden Kunst lässt sich eine deutliche Zunahme von Werken konstatieren, die auf die gegenwärtige Krise reagieren.

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<sup>1</sup> Jens Jessen hat dazu in der ZEIT alles Nötige gesagt: „Man schämt sich auch, die Gründe für die Schamverletzung zu nennen – die unzutreffende Parallelisierung (die Juden sind ja nicht auf der Suche nach einem besseren Leben, sozusagen aus Pech, in die Lager geraten), vor allem aber die marktschreierische Verwendung des Schockwortes Auschwitz. Jens Jessen, ‘Auschwitz on the Beach. Die Kasseler Documenta im Rausch der Selbstgerechtigkeit’, DIE ZEIT, 17. August 2017.



Worin besteht aber diese Krise, die Europa und die in der EU versammelten Nationalstaaten auf unterschiedliche Weise derzeit herausfordert? Besteht sie in der Ankunft einer unerwartet großen Zahl von Migranten und Migrantinnen seit dem Sommer 2015 und in den nicht zu leugnenden Erschütterungen, die diese Ankunft ausgelöst hat? Besteht sie in den gesellschaftlichen Verwerfungen, vom Brexit über die Wahl Donald Trumps zum Präsidenten der USA, den illiberalen Tendenzen in Ländern wie Ungarn, Polen und Italien, bis zur Formierung populistischer, nationalistischer und fremdenfeindlicher Bewegungen und Parteien selbst im Herzen Europas? Stellen diese Verwerfungen unseren naiven Glauben an die Tragfähigkeit liberaler Demokratien mit den Prinzipien der Gewaltenteilung und der Grundrechte auch von Minderheiten in Frage? Alles scheint neu auf dem Prüfstand zu stehen: Identitäten und Zugehörigkeiten, Kulturbegriffe, Heimatgefühle, Aspekte von Geschichtlichkeit und historischem Bewusstsein, die Bedeutung von Grenzen und Öffnungen, selbst jede alltägliche kulturelle Praxis wie das Grüßen oder das Bewirten von Gästen – und vor allem die Sprache, in der wir uns über diese Dinge verständigen.

In dieser Situation sind aus unserer Sicht Wissenschaften wie die Kulturanthropologie und die Empirische Kulturwissenschaft in besonderer Weise herausgefordert. Das sind „unsere“ Themen, die schon 1978 von Hermann Bausinger, Utz Jeggle, Gottfried Korff und Martin Scharfe in den *Grundzügen der Volkskunde* entwickelt wurden.<sup>2</sup> Haben diese Wissenschaften auch einen politischen Auftrag?<sup>3</sup> Wenn ja, worin sollte der in diesem Fall bestehen? Was könnte unser spezifischer Beitrag zu einer gesellschaftlichen Verständigung, in angemessener Sprache, über diese Themen sein? Die Wochenzeitung DIE ZEIT und zehn Medienpartner haben, unter der Schirmherrschaft des deutschen Bundespräsidenten, eine Initiative „Deutschland spricht“ ins Leben gerufen, um Menschen miteinander ins Gespräch zu bringen, die – nicht nur in der Flüchtlingspolitik – unterschiedliche Ansichten vertreten. Könnten wir mit unserer Arbeit auch eine solche Plattform anbieten? Das könnte schwierig werden, noch sind asylkritische oder gar „identitäre“ Positionen – aus unserer Sicht: erfreulicherweise – nicht im Fach zu hören. Das könnte einen aber auch misstrauisch machen: Haben wir uns, als Teil der gerade aus allen Richtungen stark angefeindeten „Elite“, so weit vom „Volk“ entfernt, dass bestimmte Ansichten gar nicht bis zur Ebene der Kongresse und Zeitschriften durchdringen? Oder geht eine solche Frage schon zu weit auf diejenigen ein, die sich lautstark für „das Volk“ erklären und zugleich andere ausgrenzen? Wie sicher sind wir unserer eigenen Meinungen?

Kunst provoziert. Im besten Falle stellt sie auch unbequeme Fragen, fordert gewohnte Sichtweisen und Überzeugungen heraus – und nicht nur die der „anderen“. Deshalb meinen wir, dass eine Untersuchung und Präsentation künstlerischer Auseinandersetzungen mit Migration und Mobilität eine gute Gelegenheit bietet, diese komplexen Fragen zu diskutieren. Damit stehen wir natürlich nicht alleine. Burcu Dogramaci hat sich in dem von ihr herausgegeben Band *Migration und künstlerische Produktion* mit der Frage beschäftigt, „welche Bedeutung Einwanderung für künstlerische Produktion und Praktiken, für neue Ideen, Bilder, Methoden und Theorien hat“ und wie das „zunehmende Interesse von Künstlern an Themen wie Heimat und Fremde,

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2 Hermann Bausinger, Utz Jeggle, Gottfried Korff, Martin Scharfe. *Grundzüge der Volkskunde*. (Darmstadt: WBG, 1978).

3 Johanna Rolshoven, Ingo Schneider (Hrsg.), *Dimensionen des Politischen. Ansprüche und Herausforderungen der Empirischen Kulturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Neofelis, 2018).



Wanderung und Displacement“ sich ausdrückt.<sup>4</sup> Marie-Hélène Gutberlet hat das Thema über Europa hinausgeführt und mit ihrer Plattform „Migration & Media“ einen translokalen Raum geschaffen, „in dem Veränderungen, Innovationen, neue Perspektiven und Haltungen aus der Migrationserfahrung in Form von Filmen, Texten und Bildern und anderen Denk- und Gestaltungsformen wahrnehmbar werden“<sup>5</sup>

In unserem Call for Papers wurden – als Anregung, nicht als Vorgabe – einige historische Beispiele genannt: Gustave Dorés „Le juif éternel“, das die Legende vom ewig wandernden Juden aufgreift (1856) oder Felix Nussbaums „Selbstporträt im Versteck“ (1944), das eine Familie beim Betrachten der Weltkarte zeigt; italienische und spanische Auswandererlieder wie „Mamma mia, da mi cento lire“ oder „L’Emigrant“, die bis heute eine kulturelle Brücke zwischen den Orten der Herkunft und den Orten der Zuflucht in den Amerikas darstellen; Theateraufführungen wie Cataldo Perris „Bastimenti. Träume und Schimären zwischen Tarantella und Tango“ oder Ariane Mnouchkines „Le Dernier Caravansérail“ (2003), oder zuletzt Stefan Puchers Adaption eines Romanstoffs von Lion Feuchtwanger aus den 1930er Jahren, „Exil“, die unter dem Titel „Wartesaal“ im November 2017 in den Münchner Kammerspielen aufgeführt wurde. In einer Besprechung der Aufführung hieß es:

„Der ehemalige Musikprofessor ‚Sepp‘ Trautwein schreibt bei der Exil-Zeitung glühende Zeilen gegen die Nazis. Doch die Zweifel, ob das überhaupt etwas bringt, dieses Reden gegen die Rechten, die ja doch machen, was sie wollen, sind berechtigt. Ein junger Literat erzählt hier spöttisch von einem Kinderspiel: ‚Wir setzten uns an einen großen Tisch und überdeckten ihn mit vielerlei Papieren, Bleistiften, Tintenfassern. Wir schrieben, telefonierten, liefen als Boten herein und hinaus und hatten es schrecklich wichtig.‘“<sup>6</sup>

Das kommt einem beim Lesen der Nachrichten über einen Chemnitzer „Trauermarsch“, der zur Hetzjagd gegen Ausländer wurde, doch sehr vertraut vor. Wir sitzen alle an unseren Schreibtischen, telefonieren und mailen, und haben es vielleicht auch wichtig. Tun wir auch, was richtig ist? Und was *ist* richtig? Die Beiträge dieser Ausgabe handeln nahezu alle vom öffentlichen Raum – von städtischen Straßen, von Häusern der Begegnung, von Grenzregionen, von Reisen auf den Spuren einer Familiengeschichte. Wie haben historische Migrationsformen unsere öffentlichen Räume beeinflusst, und wie steht es heute damit? Wie bewegen wir uns auf den Straßen unserer Städte und in der Landschaft? Nehmen wir Veränderungen wahr, die durch neue Formen von Mobilität und Migration ausgelöst wurden? Erfahren wir diese Veränderungen als spannend und bereichernd, oder als angsteinflößend und einschüchternd? Wie verarbeiten wir solche Gefühle? Utz Jeggle, wer sonst, hat anlässlich der Eröffnung einer Ausstellung in Rottenburg Überlegungen zum Thema „Heimat Kunst“ angestellt, die uns vielleicht weiterhelfen:

„Die Moderne hat viel mit Bewegung zu tun, mit Beschleunigung, Tempo, Ungemütlichkeit, Reichweite, Entfernung. Legte zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts ein Durchschnittsmensch täglich

4 Burcu Dogramaci (Hg.), Migration und künstlerische Produktion. Aktuelle Perspektiven (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013).

5 Migration & Media, <http://www.migrationandmedia.com/d-index.htm> [29.08.2018].

6 Philipp Bovermann, ‚Warten ist der Tod‘, [nachtkritik.de](http://nachtkritik.de) 25. November 2017, [https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14690:wartesaal-an-den-muenchner-kammerspielen-stefan-pucher-einen-romanstoff-von-lion-feuchtwanger&catid=38&Itemid=40](https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14690:wartesaal-an-den-muenchner-kammerspielen-stefan-pucher-einen-romanstoff-von-lion-feuchtwanger&catid=38&Itemid=40).



500 Meter zurück, den Sitzberuf des Schneiders ebenso mitgezählt, wie die ewige Wanderschaft der Bettler und Unbehausten, verzwanzigfachte sich diese Zahl im Verlauf des 20. Jahrhunderts. Entortung heißt das Leitwort, mit dem diese Begleiterscheinung der Globalisierung gekennzeichnet wird. [...] So ist es gut, dass es Kräfte gibt, die den Unort in Anspruch nehmen, und gleichzeitig mit anderen teilen. Ich rede von Kunst, die das andere Prinzip verkörpert, aber deshalb noch lange nicht einfach das Gegenteil ist. Auch wenn Kunst das Andere repräsentiert, ist sie insgesamt nicht ortlos [...]. Das Zwischen ist das Königreich der Heimatkunst, sie liebt keine besitzergreifende Eindeutigkeit, sondern das vielsinnige Schweben zwischen den Kulturen. Das ist der Reichtum, der einer einseitigen Leitkultur fehlt. Heimatkunst ist kein Ersatz, kein Reservat, keine Herberge zur Heimat, sie hält auch Ausländer und einheimische Fremde aus. Die Bewegung ist ihr Ziel; sie kommt im Reisen an, verzichtet auf naive Heimateri und findet eine eigene Welt mit eigenen Gesetzen. Heimatkunst ist gewissermaßen die Brücke, die den Übergang zum Anderen erlernbar macht, ohne das Eigene zu vergessen. Heimatkunst ist nicht nur die Suche nach der Kunst in der Heimat, sondern auch die Klärung der Frage nach der Heimat in der Kunst [...] Kunst ist das Andere, das sich nicht einfach erschließen läßt, sondern das Heimat öffnet, und deren Verheißung erzählt.“<sup>7</sup>

Heimat und Exil stehen in einem dialektischen Zusammenhang. Wer ins Exil geht, wer emigriert, verlässt eine Gegend, die Heimat war und in der das Leben schwierig oder sogar unerträglich wurde, erreicht dann – wenn es gelingt – eine neue Gegend, die Heimat werden soll. Für diesen Prozess ist viel Kreativität erforderlich: Emigranten müssen sich ein Bild von der Welt machen, eine neue „geographical imagination“ aufbauen,<sup>8</sup> transnationale Kontakte knüpfen, sich über Arbeits- und Integrationsmöglichkeiten kundig machen, Wege finden. Was derzeit auf dem Mittelmeer und vor den Hafenstädten der „Festung Europa“ geschieht, illustriert dies auf dramatische Weise. Dabei richtet sich der Blick der Öffentlichkeit, auch der Medien, zwangsläufig auf Migranten als Opfer – von Politik, Ökonomie oder gefährdeter Umwelt, von Schleusern und von Aufnahmegesellschaften, denen die kurzfristig ausgerufene „Willkommenskultur“ abhanden gekommen ist. Zu selten wird das kreative Potential der Migrierenden und des Prozesses der Migration herausgearbeitet. Und hier könnte der Forschung zur aktuellen Migration tatsächlich ein Blick auf die Entwicklung der Forschung zur historischen Auswanderung weiterhelfen. Vor allem die von der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft in Deutschland erzwungene Emigration von Juden und politischen Opponenten des Regimes hat zuletzt neue Perspektiven angeboten.

In seinem Buch *Erfahrungen* beschreibt Hans Habe die Situation des Emigranten, der, einmal fremd gemacht, zum Fremden gemacht, nirgendwo mehr heimisch werden kann; Habe stellt aber der Trauer, die solche Darstellungen immer umschließt, eine überraschend positive Einschätzung zur Seite: „Weil die Emigranten von gestern nirgends zu Hause sind (...), sind sie überall zu Hause, wer keine Heimat hat, dessen Heimat ist die Welt, neben dem Kainsmal gibt es auch ein Abelsmal.“<sup>9</sup> Heimatlosigkeit wird, zwangsläufig und freilich gegen den Willen

7 Utz Jeggle, Vortrag „Heimat Kunst“, Rottenburg 2001, [https://www2.lmz-bw.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Medi-enbildung\\_MCO/fileadmin/bibliothek/jeggle\\_heimat/jeggle\\_heimat.pdf](https://www2.lmz-bw.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Medi-enbildung_MCO/fileadmin/bibliothek/jeggle_heimat/jeggle_heimat.pdf)

8 Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

9 Hans Habe, *Erfahrungen* (Olten: Walter verlag, 1973), S. 233. Siehe auch Siehe Peter Burke, *Exiles and expatriates in the history of knowledge, 1500-2000* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2017).



dessen, der seine Heimat verliert, dem sie genommen wird, zum Aufenthalt, zur Wohnung, die etwas enthält und bereithält, womit nicht gleich zu rechnen war, ein Mehr an Erfahrung und Erlebnis. Das ist denen verwehrt, die zurückbleiben:

„Die Daheimgebliebenen sind immer noch fremd in London und Rom und New York, Gott hat sie mit Provinzialismus geschlagen, und der Emigrant von gestern ist nicht einmal fremd in der Wüste oder im Dschungel, er isst mit Stäbchen und wirft Speere und trägt ein Leopardenfell und tanzt fremde Tänze und betet in fremden Kirchen und weint bei fremden Beerdigungen. Weil er mehr erfahren hat, weiß er mehr, und weil er mehr weiß, ist er mehr. Weil er nirgends zu Hause ist, kann er nirgends mehr vertrieben werden. Er hat kein Heimweh.“<sup>10</sup>

Das Zitat macht eine andere Perspektive auf Exil und Migration sichtbar und öffnet unseren Horizont auf die Möglichkeitswelten. Heimat, Heimatlosigkeit, Heimweh – das sind Begriffe, die in unseren Zeiten unversehens sehr aktuell geworden sind, von der Einrichtung eigener Ministerien bis zur erneut aufflammenden Debatte, wer denn zur „Heimat“ gehören darf.<sup>11</sup> Sie sind auch Gegenstand künstlerischer Arbeiten von der Art der hier vorgestellten. Es ist dabei interessant zu sehen, dass museale Zeugnisse – wie die im Call for Papers beispielhaft erwähnten – in keinem der Beiträge als Thema für einen Beitrag gewählt wurden. In diesem Zusammenhang sollte vielleicht die Initiative für ein „Exilmuseum“ kurz angesprochen werden. Zwar sind die bisher publizierten Überlegungen zu dieser Initiative, die auf die Autorin Herta Müller zurückgehen und mit Christoph Stözl, dem ehemaligen Direktor des Deutschen Historischen Museums, und Claus-Dieter Krohn, dem früheren Vorsitzenden der Gesellschaft für Exilforschung, prominente Unterstützer gefunden hat, durchaus bemerkenswert. Das geplante Museum

„... sucht die Lebensgeschichten hinter Statistiken und abstrakten Lexikongrößen. Im Zentrum der Ausstellung stehen die Schicksale einzelner Menschen. Sie sind die Akteur\*innen, Träger\*innen und Symbole der Exilgeschichte.

... spürt der Erfahrung des Exils anhand von bestimmten Motiven und Themen nach und ermöglicht dem Publikum so eine bewegende Nahsicht auf das Thema.

... macht historische Hintergründe verständlich. Es begreift dabei die Emigration aus dem Machtbereich der Nationalsozialisten als ein Unrecht, das uns heute noch etwas angeht. Was können wir aus der Geschichte für das Heute lernen?

... erzählt von der Zwangsemigration nach 1933 im Bewusstsein, dass das Jahrhundert des Exils noch immer kein Ende gefunden hat. Wie wurden Flucht und Entwurzelung zu zentralen Erfahrungen unserer Zeit? Was hat sich im 20. Jahrhundert verändert, dass von einem „Jahrhundert des Exils“ gesprochen werden kann?

... richtet den Blick auch auf die Gegenwart: Über 65 Millionen Menschen sind aktuell

10 Ebd.

11 Vgl. Joachim Schlör, 'Migration als Thema jüdischer Volkskunde und Ethnografie', in Jahrbuch des Selma-Stern-Zentrums für jüdische Studien Berlin-Brandenburg 2019 (im Erscheinen).



weltweit auf der Flucht – jeder 113. Mensch ist betroffen. Welche Verbindung besteht zwischen Exil damals und heute?

... berichtet davon, wie der Exodus aus Mitteleuropa auch zum transnationalen Ideentransfer wurde. Es zeigt, wie Migration in bedeutsamer Weise kulturelle Muster verändert – eine Erkenntnis, die für ein friedvolles Miteinander in unserer globalisierten Welt immer wichtiger wird.<sup>12</sup>

Gerade der letzte Punkt verweist auf das oben angesprochene kreative Potential. Eine vertiefte Auseinandersetzung mit der Idee des Ideentransfers würde es ermöglichen, Menschen, die sich unterwegs befinden, als Akteure, als handelnde Persönlichkeiten wahrzunehmen. Aber ist ein Museum dafür der richtige Ort? Sollten nicht die Formen der Darstellung selbst etwas vom mobilen Charakter der Ereignisse, vom Unterwegssein und seiner Verarbeitung enthalten? In diese Richtung bewegen sich die Beiträge der vorliegenden Ausgabe.

Der erste Beitrag dieses Heftes, von der Künstlerin Katy Beinart, schildert die Reise „zu den Wurzeln“, die sie mit ihrer Schwester zusammen unternommen hat: Brot und Salz sind zugleich ein künstlerisches Schwellenritual für das Ankommen und eine Erinnerungschiffre für die eigene Familiengeschichte im politisch russischen und kulturell jüdischen Osteuropa, die Geschichte der Auswanderung aus dem Gebiet des heutigen Litauens über Russland, Deutschland und England nach Südafrika. Die Reise in die mobile Erinnerung der Mobilität erwies sich als schwierig, eine Herausforderung an die Methodologie des künstlerischen Forschens. Sie gelang, weil sie, wie die Autorin schreibt, von der Obsession des Nachvollziehenwollens angetrieben wurde. In einem Umgang mit den Materialien der Suche, der sowohl künstlerischen als auch wissenschaftlichen Kriterien genügt, wird die Raum- und Zeitreise in das Text- und Bilddokument dieses Beitrags gefasst, das die Autorin „Nacherinnerung“ nennt.

Der Beitrag von Tuuliikki Kurki führt vom Mittelmeer weg, an eine Grenze im Norden, die mitten durch Wälder verläuft und die während des Kalten Kriegs und heute wieder „heiß“ ist. Die Grenze zwischen Finnland und Russland mitten durch Karelien durch ist eine Schneise im Wald, aber auch in den Erinnerungen, den Herzen der Menschen. Die Spur, auf der Kurki den Traumata dieser Teilungen folgt, findet sich in der Literatur. Grenze und Bewegung lassen sich von Überquerung zu Überschreitung steigern und von Wechsel zu Verwundung. Das ist das Thema der Schriftsteller, deren künstlerisches Abklopfen der Grenzlandbiografien die Autorin befragt.

Im Lissabon, das Debora Baldelli uns schildert, sind die Phänomene schmerzloser und farbiger. Eine religiöse Gemeinschaft bündelt migrantisches und mobiles Leben und schafft einen kosmopolitischen Raum, der nicht derjenige der in dieser Stadt massiven *Touristification* ist: Das Fest der internationalen Hare Krishna-Gemeinde spielt mit dem öffentlichen Raum und praktiziert Musik und andere Ausdrucksformen.

Kathrin Harather zeigt Facetten eines Projektes des künstlerischen Forschens, das sich als eingreifend in die Vorgänge migrantischen Lebens in Wien versteht. In ihrem Beitrag ist das künstlerische nicht nur der Gegenstand der forschenden Beobachtung, sondern sowohl Teil des Forschens selbst als auch Teil des Umgangs der Migrant\_innen mit dem neuen städtischen Umfeld.

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12 Stiftung Exilmuseum Berlin, <<https://stiftung-exilmuseum.berlin/de>>



Über die Identität migrierender Künstler\_innen berichtet Lora Sariaslan anhand biographischer Notizen zu türkisch-europäischen Künstlern: Nasa Tur (heute Berlin), Anny und Sibel Öztürk (heute Frankfurt) und Servet Koçyiğit (heute Istanbul-Amsterdam). Das "heute" in den Ortsbezeichnungen deutet die diasporische Anwesenheit der Künstler in einem übernationalen Raum an, der nicht eine Entnationalisierung, sondern sogar eine höhere Politisierung bedeutet. Sariaslan plädiert dafür, das „Deutsch-Türkische“, das im Schaffen dieser Künstler\_innen zum Ausdruck kommt, nicht als Doppelheit oder Bindestrich-Identität zu betrachten, sondern als Kombination und Neugefundenes, entstanden aus der Verbindung von Kunst und Migration.

Stefanie Bürkle berichtet mit dem Fundus des Projekts künstlerischer Arbeit mit einem Schwerpunkt auf visueller Feldforschung über die Möglichkeit zu differenzierten Sichtweisen der „architektonischen“ Gestaltung der Häuser, die türkische Rückkehrer aus Deutschland bauen. Es ist ein Kapitel über „anonyme Architektur“ – das Vorbild-Haus, das Zweiteile-Haus, das Mehrschicht-Haus –, deren Gestaltung einem allgemeinen Ziel entfließt und wiederum auf den Bauherren zurückwirkt, ein biografisches Oeuvre statt eines Architektenwillens und differenzierter Ausdruck von realen und erträumten Lebensumständen.

Die Geschichte des Beitrags von Janine Schemmer beginnt an einer unscheinbaren Brücke nahe einer Industriezone im Eingang zum Natisone-Tal im Friaul, unweit der Grenze zu Slowenien. Brücke wie Zweisprachigkeit in den Ortsnamen erinnern an alte Zweiteilungen, an die historische Beweglichkeit der Grenzen. 16 Kilometer oberhalb und wenige hundert Meter von der Grenze, in der Fraktion Topolò/Topolovo, hält seit 1993 künstlerische Aktivität das Verschwinden des von neun Personen bewohnten Ortes auf. Das „Stazione Topolò“ – Bahnhof – im Namen des Festivals setzt den Kontrapunkt zur Abgelegenheit des Ortes, der nur über eine schmale Nebenstraße erschlossen ist und doch in der scheinbaren Ruhe in starker Bewegung ist. Die künstlerische Aneignung von Landschaft und Geschichte ist Programm und führt Akteure von weit her heran, eine Geschichte von Migration zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie.

Charlotte Bank vollzieht die Migration von Künstlerinnen und Künstlern aus dem Maghreb und Nahen Osten der letzten sieben Jahre nach. Nicht nur stehen sie einem anderen Publikum gegenüber, sondern sie müssen ihre Positionen inhaltlich und formal neu finden. Im Gespräch mit Künstlern, die den Weg von Syrien nach Berlin gefunden haben, hat die Autorin deren Umgang mit der neuen Situation ergründet und stellt einige ihrer Werke vor, die in Deutschland Aufmerksamkeit gefunden haben. Sie stellt fest, wie die Etikettierung von Werken der betreffenden Künstler und deren Auseinandersetzung mit der Gewalterfahrung zuwiderläuft. Sie plädiert für die empathische Öffnung europäischer Kunstinstitutionen für Bewegungen und Motive, die diesen Künstlern kreativen Raum lässt.

In diesem Sinne wünschen wir den Leserinnen und Lesern der Mobile Culture Studies eine anregende Lektüre.

Johanna Rolshoven  
Joachim Schlör





# Khlebosolny/Bread and Salt:

## A time-travelling journey to Eastern Europe (and back)<sup>1</sup>

Katy Beinart

**Abstract** In this article, I describe a journey my sister Rebecca and I made in 2012 to Eastern Europe, part diasporic return/roots journey and part artistic residency, during which we developed artworks in the form of ritual, performative practices with bread and salt. Our diasporic Jewish family had little knowledge of their place of origin, a village in Lithuania. The artworks that we made on the trip explore connections between bread, salt and memory, through the haptic qualities of touch and taste. Documenting these artworks and re-enacting family photographs calls into question the veracity of “roots” and the role of memory in the present. Through reflecting on our journey and art practices, I ask how individual subjectivities are identified and how dialogue between self and other is revealed and concealed, where those others may be in the past, and have left little trace in the present. I also ask how pasts and presents are negotiated in the making and unmaking of subjectivities, and how these contested relationships between past and present may be traced, acknowledged and surfaced. And I connect our personal history with wider heritages, ones that are currently contested and politically charged. We used bread and salt in a threshold ritual, *Khlebosolny* (2012) in which the materiality of bread and salt became tools to fill absences, and to embody different kinds of meaning. Through ephemeral memorials using salt, we left residual traces in particular places. The work we made in Vilnius and the Lithuanian villages is remembrance as an act made present, and I suggested that this ongoing process of mediation in the present can be seen as attaching specific meaning to memory by enacting it. Therefore, a choice is continually being made about how this memory and heritage is reproduced, in the present day.

**Keywords** family history, memory, postmemory, migration, diaspora, roots journey, contested heritage, ritual, performance art, photography, indexical, salt, bread

**DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.2

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on chapter 2 of my thesis ‘*Détour and Retour: Practices and poetics of salt as narratives of relation and re-generation in Brixton*’, submitted in April 2018.



## Introduction

My great-grandparents, Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe and Russia, left their homes in the late 1800s and early 1900s, never returned, and through a series of migrations ended up in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> From discussions with my family, I understood that, through stages of assimilation, aspects of our connection to our past had become less visible. While personal records of family history were kept, religious and cultural practices were not. And languages and voices had been lost too: no one spoke Yiddish or Russian anymore, although my father knew a few words in Hebrew. The fate of distant family members who had not left Eastern Europe was not something with which our immediate family seemed to feel a direct connection. I felt that there had been a deliberate attempt in our family to leave aspects of Jewish culture behind, and that they preferred the comfort of assimilation. That they escaped the fate of those who stayed behind was not something openly spoken about.

In this article, I describe a journey my sister Rebecca and I made in 2012 to Eastern Europe, part diasporic return/roots journey and part artistic residency, as part of which we developed artworks in the form of ritual, performative practices with salt; through these practices, I ask

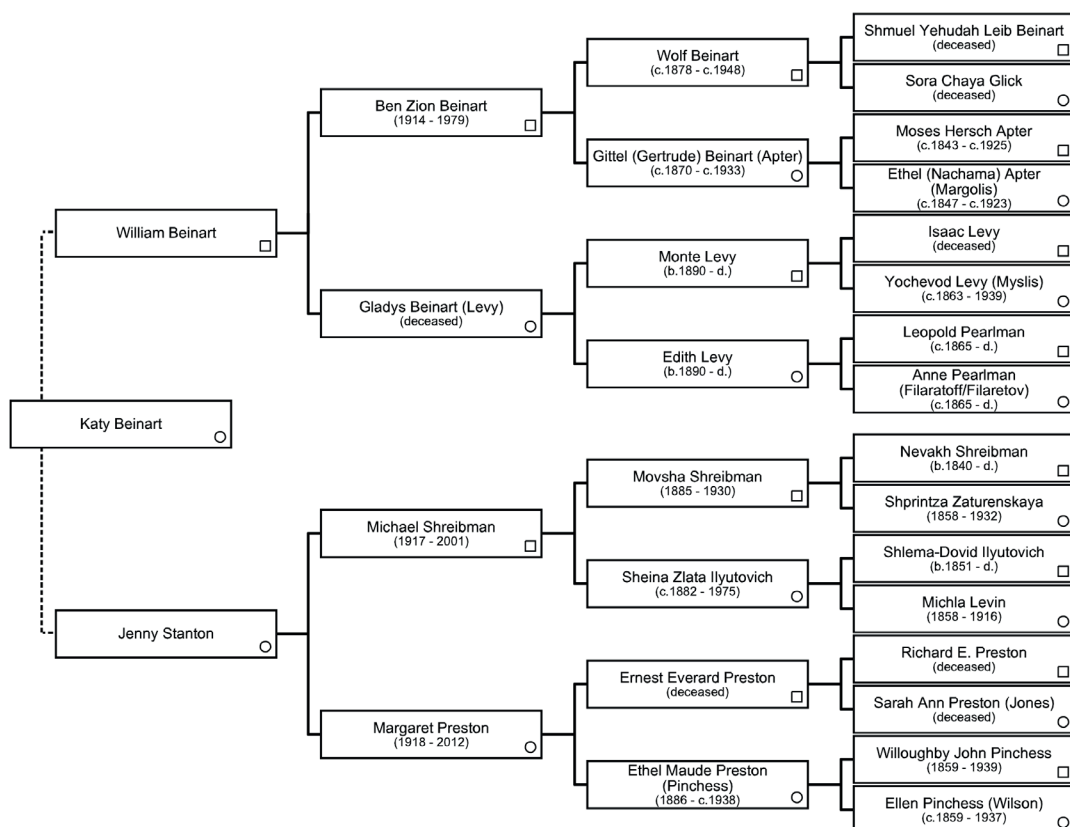


Figure 1: Family tree. Source: author.

<sup>2</sup> I refer to my father's side of the family here, and have written elsewhere about my mother's side of the family, one side of whom were Jewish migrants from what is now Belarus and the other from the English midlands.

how individual subjectivities are identified and how dialogue between self and other is revealed and concealed, where those others may be in the past. I also ask how pasts and presents are negotiated in the making and unmaking of subjectivities, and how these contested relationships between past and present may be traced, acknowledged and surfaced.



We knew that Woolf Beinart, our great-grandfather on our grandfather Ben's side, had grown up in or near to a small town in north-eastern Lithuania called Rokiskis, and that further back some family had lived in the capital Vilnius. We also knew that Anne, our great-great-grandmother on our grandmother Gladys's side, was born in St Petersburg in 1865. She had travelled with her father Nicolas Filaratoff from St Petersburg to Hamburg around 1873 and the family then settled in Hull ten years later. Anne married Leopold Pearlman in Hull and our great-grandmother, Edith Pearlman, was born in Hull in 1891. Leopold, Anne and Edith emigrated to South Africa in the early 1900s, as did Woolf.

Edith and her daughter Gladys (my father's mother) had kept quite good records of the family's period in, and later connection with, Hull. But little survived from the period before. We had a few pieces of evidence: studio photographs of Anne in Hamburg, family reminiscences, and a war medal from Russia (figure 2). In summer 2012, Rebecca and I travelled to Lithuania and St Petersburg to do further research into our family history, and make artwork together, as a mobile, unstructured residency. We hoped that this journey might enable us to fill some of the gaps and absences in our family's story.



Figure 2: Potrait and medal of Anne. Source: author.



In a conversation between Eva Hoffman, Sadiya Hartmann and Daniel Mendelsohn, all of whom have taken roots journeys, Hoffman said:

“I do think there is a need to sort of locate, locate something, locate the past which you have known about, but which you don’t know. I’m actually thinking about Freud’s formulation of melancholia, a sort of depressive melancholia. He says that mourning in which you know the object of your mourning can come to an end, but mourning in which you don’t know the object you have lost cannot come to an end. And in that sense, the second generation was placed in a melancholic position, a kind of placelessness, a kind of nameless, placeless loss. So you know, I think that locating something does matter a lot.”<sup>3</sup>

In locating the past, emotions are often brought forth. Hartmann describes how her act of journeying along the slave route required her “to be the receptacle for foreclosed and prohibited emotions – rage and grief and disappointment”.<sup>4</sup> Disappointment echoed with us too, as we struggled to find a concrete link to our family’s past. We had also met with disappointment in the process of undertaking this journey, as our original plans had to be reshaped. Discomfort was another emotion that emerged on the trip, both in the physical sense of ongoing travelling, and in the awkwardness of not knowing languages or the right words to try to explain what we wanted to find out.

We had first proposed this trip in 2008, before our South Africa journey and residency, but we ran up against discouragement: “as you may imagine the emigration is a very over-used and active topic in Lithuania”.<sup>5</sup> It is old news, travelling back to find one’s Jewish roots in Eastern Europe. We were just two more pilgrims on a well-worn trail.<sup>6</sup> In the context of others travelling on roots journeys, here I will specifically refer to the work of the South Africa-born writer Dan Jacobson, whose book *Heshel’s Kingdom* is about a journey he undertook in search of his grandfather Heshel Melamed, similar to our journey to Lithuania.<sup>7</sup> In this article, I also draw on texts which hold memories of the life of the Jewish communities prior to World War Two and are known as *Yizkor* books, which, according to the JewishGen website:

“were written after the Holocaust as memorials to Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust. They were usually put together by survivors from those communities and contain descriptions and histories of the community, biographies of prominent people, lists of people who perished, etc.”<sup>8</sup>

This search for roots felt more obscure and unknown than a previous trip to South Africa we had made in 2010.<sup>9</sup> Our connection to Eastern Europe was tenuous, based only on the handed-down fragments of family stories. But it also felt necessary and obsessive, a calling we

3 Sadiya Hartman, Eva Hoffman and Daniel Mendelsohn, ‘Memoirs of return’, in *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), edited by Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller, pp. 107-23, at pp. 116-17.

4 Hartman, Hoffman and Mendelsohn, ‘Memoirs of return’, p. 115.

5 Email correspondence between author and curator, September 17, 2009

6 I write more extensively on the literature of roots journeys in Chapter 1 of the thesis.

7 Dan Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom* (London: Penguin, 1998).

8 ‘Yizkor Book Project: Frequently Asked Questions’, JewishGen website: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/>> [accessed 10 August 2017].

9 See: Katy Beinart, ‘Origination: Journeying In The Footsteps Of Our Ancestors’, in *Sacred Mobilities: Journeys of Belief and Belonging* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), edited by Avril Maddrell, Alan Terry and Tim Gale, pp. 165-180.



were drawn to carry out. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller write of the “seduction of the quest for a direct link to deep roots and family bloodlines”, and they ask “how in particular does a feminist subject negotiate the intensities and contradictory impulses of diasporic return?”<sup>10</sup> Inherent within this impulse to journey back to places of origin is, Hirsch and Miller argue, a contradiction, which they present as, on the one hand, a performative cultural self-construction that would seem to allow for the self-construction of a roots story, and, on the other hand, “the elaboration of new identities secured by the evidence of science and genetics” that would seem to suggest a roots journey as directed by orthodoxies of race and specific locations of origin.<sup>11</sup>

Departing on this trip, I was aware of certain contradictions between my present situation and those of my ancestors in the past, between our (my own and my sister’s) known identities, and the uncertain identities we hoped to connect with. In the context of this journey, Rebecca and I were travelling as independent, unmarried, working artists and academics. Although ostensibly a roots journey, the implicit difference was our interest in uncertainty and in the contradiction described above between genetic roots and self-constructed roots. We both felt that finding out where we came from would not necessarily give us answers to our current identities, and that the present state of the places we were travelling to may hold little connection to their pasts.

On my father’s side, our family story had dual origins. On Woolf’s side, the family’s origins were in Eastern European Jewish shtetl life, a life unknown to me; for example, I knew little about how a woman of my age would have lived and the roles and identities which she would have assumed. That shtetl life was long gone, and the Jewish community had been devastated by the Holocaust in the 1940s, so that the reality of these places held an uncertain image for us. On Edith’s side was a relatively successful St Petersburg-based Jewish business family, which later managed to sustain a middle-class lifestyle, first in Hull, England, and then in Pretoria, South Africa.<sup>12</sup>

Hirsch and Miller use two key terms to develop a critical dialogue within these contradictions between a cultural self-construction and a genetically evidenced, historically based identity. Hirsch’s idea of ‘postmemory’ understands the legacies of the past as “always already inflected by broader public and generational stories, images, artefacts, and understandings that together shape identity and identification”, while Miller discusses how the ‘transpersonal’ recognizes that the personal is necessarily political, and emphasizes links that go not just backwards but also sideways in the present, as ‘a zone of relation that is social, affective, material, and inevitably public’.<sup>13</sup>

Hirsch and Miller also refer to the poet Adrienne Rich, who wrote in the mid-1980s: “I’ve been thinking a lot about the obsession with origins, it seems a way of stopping time in its tracks. Don’t we have to start here, where we are?”<sup>14</sup> Rich’s comment suggests that, in thinking about journeys of return, we need to start from where we are and understand how our own identities and social relations in the present relate to, and shape, our ideas of origin.

Subsequently, I want to ask: how do our auto-ethnographic explorations into familial, pri-

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10 Hirsch and Miller (note 3), *Rites of Return*, pp. 2-3.

11 Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*, p. 2.

12 See figure 1: Family tree.

13 Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*, pp. 4-5.

14 Adrienne Rich, ‘Notes towards a politics of location’, in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 210-32.



vate realms relate back to the wider society and culture we exist in?

Therefore, an important aspect for Rebecca's and my journey was to develop our work with visibility and to make specific acts or rituals that would allow us to mark the past while acknowledging the choices of our family to leave that past behind. The difficult relationship that can exist between past and present when certain aspects of the past do not want to be acknowledged is something I seek to explore in this article. In order to reflect on this further, I include short texts written at the time of making the artworks (which we wrote as part of an online blog<sup>15</sup>) alongside later reflective writing that brings in relevant theory to understand the meaning of the artworks, so that within the text there is a layering of voices from different moments in time.

Performing rituals in sites of our family history gives voice to the past in the present, allowing what Karen Till has termed 'spectral traces'<sup>16</sup> to resurface, and past generations to be heard in the here and now. This article describes our trip in search of the personal absences within our family story. On the trip, rituals and practices are developed which become a means to remember, and to embody absence; the materials of bread and salt become a means to fill absences, and to embody different kinds of meaning. Our bodies become a means to establish a link to the past, making forms of memorialisation which are ephemeral and transient.

### The journey to Eastern Europe

In order to trail our family's migrations, we planned to travel as much as possible over land and by sea, but not to stick exactly to our family's routes. This was for several reasons: we did not know their exact routes; we were re-enacting multiple journeys by family members; and it was not always possible to access the same routes they had taken (for example, sea travel from Hamburg to Hull no longer operated). We therefore planned to travel overland to Hamburg (where the studio photographs of our great-great-grandmother Anne were taken), before taking a ferry from nearby Kiel to Klaipeda in Lithuania. We would

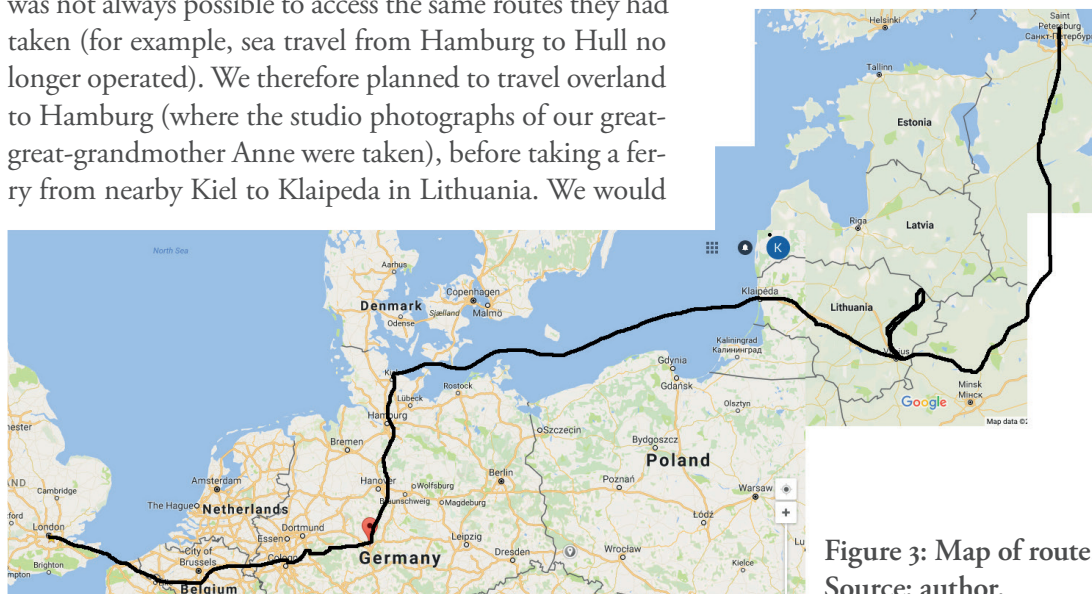


Figure 3: Map of route.  
Source: author.

15 Beinart, Katy and Rebecca, *Origination* (blog), (2008-12). Project Blog at AN Artists Talking, <<https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/origination/>>

16 Karen Till and Julian Jonker, 'Mapping and excavating spectral traces in post-apartheid Cape Town', *Memory Studies* September 2009 vol. 2 no. 3, pp. 303-335.

then travel over land by bus to the capital Vilnius where we would meet our father William, who would be accompanying us by car to Rokiskis. Finally, we would catch a sleeper train from Vilnius to St Petersburg, returning to the UK by air (see map, figure 3). In our luggage, we took our starter culture mix for bread-making, and the salt we had collected in the salt pans in South Africa, with plans to re-enact our *khlebosolny* threshold ritual of sharing bread and salt at points on our journey.<sup>17</sup>

### Hamburg: *Finding Anne* (2012-17)

*“We spent Saturday roaming the streets of Hamburg, following the very faint trail of our great-great-grandmother Anne Filaratoff, and her father Nicholas. We believe they came to Hamburg from St Petersburg in the 1870s and stayed for up to a decade before leaving for Hull (and Anne eventually for South Africa). Katy had scanned two portrait photographs of Anne, with the address of 19th-century photography studios on the back. So we began our day searching for these addresses, negotiating a large triathlon that blocked many of the city centre streets. Opposite the Rathaus, we found the first address, which had a serendipitous advert for a photo service in the window. The second address was now a shiny clothes shop, and we took photographs at each location posed as Anne had, 120 years ago.”<sup>18</sup>*

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17 Beinart, ‘Origination: Journeying In The Footsteps Of Our Ancestors’, p. 167, 170.

18 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, ‘Hamburg-Veddel’, *Origination* (blog), 26 July 2012. Project Blog at AN Artists Talking, <<https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/origination/>>

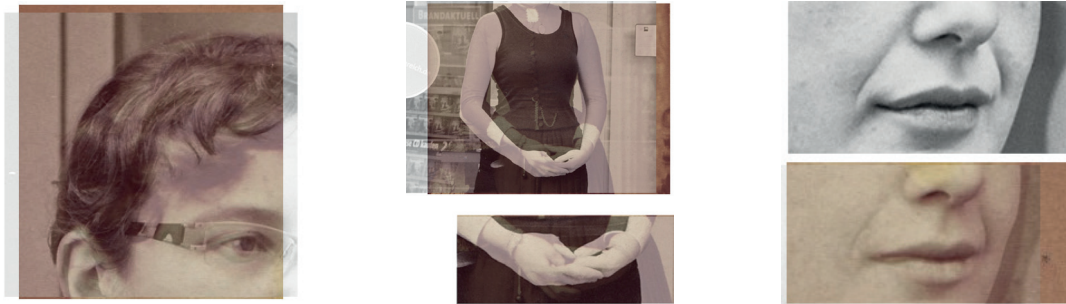


Figure 4-6: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Finding Anne*, 2012-2017. Source: author.

Later, looking at these photographs alongside the originals, there seemed so many incongruities: the informality of the clothes we were wearing compared to Anne's formality, the differences between her tightly held-in waist, hourglass-shaped body, and our unbound bodies, the formality of the studio compared to the shiny shop window full of advertisements for photographic services where we photographed ourselves (figure 4). And yet I could see traces of gestures, in the shape of the lips, the eyes, a disobedient fringe (figure 5). In one photograph, Rebecca wears a photograph of Edith, Anne's daughter, around her neck in a direct echo of Anne's necklace. In gazing off somewhere else, my expression is not unlike Anne's, and my folded hands and arms are positioned exactly as hers were, leaning casually on an ornate stand (figure 6). The elaborately detailed architectural elements of the studio lend gravitas to Anne's pose, even though she is very young in the photographs, while next to me the rucksacks and the woman smiling with a card suggest a more slapdash, less serious self-presentation.

In our guise as tourists, recreating a family photograph from another time, the intentional act of reconstruction highlights the mixture of excitement and disappointment at finding the location one has been searching for, but where nothing actually remains of what one had been looking for. We could not find any remnants of the studios Anne had had her picture taken in, but the act of taking the photographs made us look more closely at the original photographs and begin to imagine the intentions behind them. The photographs probably date from the late 1870s or early 1880s. Anne looks about 17 or 18 years old, which would make the date 1883, when she departed for England. We know she was staying there with her father, and he may have taken her to have the photographs done for an occasion. Perhaps they marked her arrival into womanhood?

In his account of a journey to Lithuania in search of his grandfather Heshel Melamed, whom he never met, Dan Jacobson carries a studio photo of Heshel taken just before he was due to depart for America:

"There is just one photograph of Heshel Melamed in my possession. It is in front of me now. It is not large – about six inches by four inches – and is printed in the sepia tints of the time ... Looking at them [his eyes] I can still see today, reflected in his eyes, the light that once shone in some photographic studio in Kaunas (Kovno to him) or Siauliai (Shavel to him). The reflections bear indisputable witness to the consciousness that was then his. Obedient to the photographer's command, he had self-consciously stiffened his gaze and directed it into the back lens of the camera."<sup>19</sup>

19 Jacobson, *Heshel's Kingdom*, pp. 9-10.



Jacobson is aware that the photograph refers to a precise moment in time, a moment that Heshel Melamed had recorded as a marker of a change in his life, a record of departure.

Roland Barthes writes of the photograph as a ‘certificate of presence’.<sup>20</sup> Although he strains at first to ‘find’ his mother in the collection of photographs he has of her after her death, Barthes finally discovers her presence in one particular photograph, of her as a little girl aged five in the ‘Winter Garden’ of the house in which she was born:

“These same photographs, which phenomenology would call ‘ordinary’ objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being.”<sup>21</sup>

Barthes terms this photograph a *punctum*, or a wounding.<sup>22</sup> He felt that this wounding hit him directly with his mother’s presence as he gazed at this particular photograph.

Barthes discusses how photographs are direct referents to the real, unlike other systems of representation.<sup>23</sup> This is made certain in part through the pose (the photograph as evidence of a moment when the pose took place, ‘something has posed in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever’<sup>24</sup>) but in larger part through the recording of light and the chemistry of the photograph:

“The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here, the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.”<sup>25</sup>

Hirsch, writing about Barthes in the context of family photography, argues that he “intensifies the indexical relationship when he speaks of the photograph as a physical, material emanation of a past reality; its speech act is constative: it authenticates the reality of the past and provides a material connection to it”.<sup>26</sup> If, as she says, reference for Barthes is not content but presence, what is indexed through the photograph is the presence of a moment in time.

The photo Rebecca and I have of Anne contains a recording of light at a precise moment in time: the light in a studio in Hamburg, at a moment in her life on the cusp of adulthood, emigration and change. The image of Anne acts as a referent not just to her own departure for a new life, for it also holds within it a point in our family story, a decision to leave for England (we don’t know why), which becomes crucial to her identity and much later to our own. We also do not know who the photographs were taken *for*.

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20 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 87.

21 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 71.

22 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 27.

23 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 76.

24 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 78.

25 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 80-81.

26 Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 6.



Figure 7: Photograph of Nicholas Filaratoff. Source: Bryan Levy.



Figure 8-9: Photograph of Anne as a girl; reverse of Photograph. Source: Bryan Levy.

the referent of ourselves in the moment of taking our photograph, but there is also the referent of Anne's image in the past. An image that, to me, is consciously unauthentic – a deliberate recreation that is impossible to make accurate or authentic – becomes a new moment and a new relationship between viewer and referent, so that in a sense we are making memories for the future. We can tell stories and put on record our search for a place in which Anne was only fleetingly present, and on which multiple memories and identities have since been layered.

At the time we made this trip, we had no photographic image of her father, Nicholas, but had heard that an image of him in furs, probably taken in Russia, existed (see figure 7). Several years after our trip, Brian, a cousin of my father and the eldest son of Edith's son Magnus, sent me a digital image of this photograph which he had in his house in Sydney, Australia. Brian was planning his own trip to St Petersburg on the family history trail and had found a few photographs that he received from his father. He also sent us a picture of a young girl, taken in a studio in St Petersburg (figures 8 and 9). I could see the resemblance to the photographs of Anne and deduced that it was likely to be her as a young girl. But in all these pictures, there is the absence of a mother – Anne's mother. This is an incomplete family unit in an incomplete family tree.

In *Finding Anne*, Rebecca's and my re-enactment of Anne's photographs in Hamburg, and my layering of these images, the question of the referent is complicated. Looking at our images, there is

### Jatkowa Street, Vilnius, Lithuania: *Ar pamenate i Meisels?* (2012)<sup>27</sup>

Arriving in Vilnius, where we were staying with an artist friend, we explored the old city, which was also the location of the former Jewish Ghetto. A memorial plaque showed the location of the ‘small’ and ‘big’ ghettos (figure 10), but few other physical remnants of the heritage of the Jewish community remained in these sites. Historically, Vilnius had been the centre of a large Jewish community and a focus of Judaic religious culture in Europe; it was known as “the Jerusalem of the north”.<sup>28</sup> According to the 1897 census, Jews constituted 38.8 per cent of the city’s population, amounting to



Figure 10: Ghetto map, Vilnius.

Photograph: Katy Beinart. Source: author.

64,000 individuals.<sup>29</sup> By the early twentieth century, half of the city’s population of 120,000 were Jews, most of whom spoke Yiddish. The city was also a focus for the Yiddish language, and it was home to the famed Yiddish Institute of Higher Learning (YIVO), which was relocated to New York in 1940,<sup>30</sup> as well as the Strashum Library, which housed the world’s largest collection of Yiddish language books.<sup>31</sup> Under the Nazis, Jews were corralled first into the ‘small’ ghetto and later into the ‘big’ ghetto, from where they were subsequently taken to be liquidated.<sup>32</sup>

We had been in touch with a distant relative on a family tree website who had told us that we had ancestors, the Meisels, who had lived in the old city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rabbi Moishe Meisels, Rebecca’s and my fifth great-grandfather, was born in the city in 1759 and was a renowned rabbi, leading the Chassidic community in Vilnius until 1816 when he emigrated to what was then Palestine.<sup>33</sup> According to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, Meisels also acted as a spy for the Russian army during the Napoleonic wars, and was fluent in German, Russian, Polish and French.<sup>34</sup> In the local archives we found records

27 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate i Meisels?*, performance, photographic documentation, 27 July 2012.

28 Carmelo Lisciotto, ‘The Vilnius ghetto: Jewish life in Vilnius/Vilna’ (Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, 2007), Holocaust Research Project website: <<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/vilnius.html>> [accessed 10 July 2017].

29 Lisciotto, ‘The Vilnius Ghetto’.

30 YIVO website: <<https://www.yivo.org/History-of-YIVO>> [accessed 10 July 2017].

31 Lisciotto, ‘The Vilnius Ghetto’.

32 Lisciotto, ‘The Vilnius Ghetto’.

33 See ‘Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid’, Chabad website: <[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1155/jewish/Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1155/jewish/Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid.htm)> [accessed 10 July 2017]; originally published in Yanki Tauber, *Once Upon a Chassid: The Wisdom and the Whimsy, the Fire and the Joy: Stories, Anecdotes and Sayings* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 1994).

34 ‘Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid’.



of the Meisels's addresses in Vilnius, on Jatkowa Street in the 'small' ghetto area. For the first time in our journey, a site of our family story intersected with a site of the Holocaust. The first attempt to locate their home on the street drew a blank – one side of the street was no longer there. Many buildings had changed. The Jewish quarter then was not the Jewish quarter now.

Our experience of locating our ancestors was frustrating and disappointing. The archive records were often held only in Russian, a text we could not read.

*“As we attempt to locate and decipher traces of our ancestors, we hit many problems. We have to negotiate multiple languages and translations, from Lithuanian to Russian to Yiddish to Hebrew, moving round and around in a never-ending circle of confusion. Names have been recorded in one language, translated to another, then another, through several scripts. We hit on using Google translate in a playful advertising campaign around Vilnius old town, pretty sure that the mistranslations offered by a cybernetic interpreter reflect the truth of our search.”<sup>35</sup>*

We decided to make a performative and intuitive response to Jatkowa Street, in a two-part artwork we titled *Ar pamenate į Meisels?*<sup>36</sup> ('Do you remember the Meisels?' in Lithuanian). For the first part, I dowsed with a crystal I had brought with me on the journey, stopping at each doorway on Jatkowa Street, asking it to indicate the threshold of our ancestors' home (figure 11). When we had found what we thought was their doorway, I sprinkled salt we had carried with us from South Africa onto the grass (figure 12). This salting of the earth was both a ritual act and a form of memorial. It was the first act of marking the absences, which became increasingly familiar on our journey.

At the thresholds along Jatkowa Street, archways lead off to courtyards. Under the arches, we had seen noticeboards layered with advertisements, which we couldn't read. For the second part of the artwork, we created an advertisement asking:

*Do you remember the Meisels?  
If you have any information you can share with us, please contact us at:  
Beinart\_beinart@hotmail.com*

35 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'De-Ciphering', *Origination* (blog), 3 August 2012.

36 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate į Meisels?*, performance, photographic documentation, 27 July 2012.



Figure 11-12: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate i meisels?*, 2012: Dowsing in Jatowska street, sprinkling salt on threshold. Photograph: Rebecca Beinart. Source: author.

Figure 13: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate i meisels?* advert, 2012. Photograph: Katy Beinart. Source: author.

The text of the advertisement was translated into Lithuanian, Russian and Hebrew, and it featured an email account we had set up temporarily (figure 13). We pinned the advertisement to the board, not with any real hope that we would get a response, but rather as a temporary memorial and marker of our ancestors' former home. The inevitability that the salt would absorb into the grass and that the advertisements would get overlaid by other advertisements was an intentional part of the artwork and action.

Anke Bangma has written about remembering as 'an act in the present' that does not just 'reflect past reality "as it was" but acts upon reality by organizing it and attaching specific meaning to it.'<sup>37</sup> This ongoing process of mediation in the present attaches specific meaning to memory through enacting it. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests an understanding of heritage as something produced in the present but with recourse to the past. In her writings on the cultural production of heritage, she looks at heritage as something that is not "lost or found,

37 Anke Bangma and Steve Ruston (eds), *Experience, Memory, Re-enactment* (Rotterdam: Piet Zwart Institute; Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2005), p. 14.



stolen or reclaimed” but that is rather “a mode of cultural production in the present”, producing something new, at the same time as offering a ‘second life’ to an existing place or object.<sup>38</sup> James Clifford comments that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s concept of the second life of heritage “allows us to focus on the specific processes of transformation: how elements from the past are being made and re-made in specific relational contexts”.<sup>39</sup> So, as cities, streets and buildings are regenerated, either in a deliberate process of renewal or through gradual change over time as new owners take possession, heritage and memory must be reproduced in order to continue to be made present.

In the act of salting the earth at the place we think may be the threshold of the Meisels’ home, the salt is a marker for an absence: it temporarily demarcates a space, rapidly vanishes, but subtly affects the ground into which it mixes. Leaving our adverts on the noticeboards, we returned later that week to find they had already been covered over by other notices. But were we remaking memory, performing heritage, or doing something slightly different when we performed these ritual actions in Jatkowa Street? There was no direct link between our actions in Jatkowa Street and those of our ancestors, as we did not know what kind of actions they had performed. Our artwork could be seen as a form of re-making, rather than a direct re-enactment of a known heritage. These actions resurface of the spectral traces of our ancestors as a kind of return of the repressed, and try to think through the past and its relation to the present. And our actions could be seen as seeking to establish a direct connection to the past through the body, a sort of presencing of the past in a similar sense to the way Steve Pile has written about the body in cities engaging ghost-like presences or phantasmagoria.<sup>40</sup>

Having made a personal connection to a place that had since become a public site of Holocaust memory in Vilnius, we then found more specific details of the Holocaust in Rokiskis, a town in north-eastern Lithuania that was our destination in search of our family. Our father William had just arrived in Vilnius. We decided to visit the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and its adjunct display on the Holocaust in a separate building, housed in an old green house on Pamėnkalnio Street. These museums had been set up in the 1990s, reinstating a post-war Jewish Museum as well as pre-World War Two Jewish museums and cultural collections which had previously been plundered and destroyed.<sup>41</sup> Visiting the green house, the home of the Holocaust museum, we were following in the footsteps of Dan Jacobson in *Heshel’s Kingdom*, who wrote of visiting this museum and becoming suddenly aware that ‘the worst of the pictures had been taken by the killers themselves. Or if not by the men who were actually firing the rifles and machine guns at any one moment, then certainly by their companions and accomplices.’<sup>42</sup>

In the first room of the museum, Jacobson describes “an enlarged photocopy of an official summary by Karl Jaeger (the SS Standardfuhrer, and head of Einsatzkommando 3) of his activities in Lithuania over one particular period”.<sup>43</sup>

38 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, ‘Theorizing heritage’, *Ethnomusicology*, 39 (1995), pp. 367-80, at p. 370.

39 James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 277.

40 Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 165.

41 For further details of the history of the Jewish Museums in Vilnius, see <<http://www.jmuseum.lt/en/about-the-museum/>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

42 Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 129.

43 Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 126.

Blatt 2.		
	-übertrag:	3 834
29.7.41 Kaseiniai	254 Juden, 3 lit. Kommunisten	277
30.7.41 Agriogala	27 " , 11 " "	38
31.7.41 Utens	235 " , 16 Jüdinnen, 4 lit. Komm. 1 zweifacher Raubmörder	256
11/31.7.41 Wendziogala	13 Juden, 2 Mörder	15
<u>Monat August:</u>		
1.8.41 Ukmerge	254 Juden, 42 Jüdinnen, 1 pol. Komm. 2 lit. NKWD-Agenten, 1 Bürgermeister von Jonava, der den Befehl zum An- sünden der Stadt Jonava gab	300
2.8.41 Kauen-Port IV	170 Juden, 1 USA-Jude, 1 USA-Jüdin, 33 Jüdinnen, 4 lit. Kommunisten	209
4.8.41 Panevezys	362 Juden, 41 Jüdinnen, 5 russ. Komm. 14 lit. Kommunisten	422
5.8.41 Kaseiniai	213 Juden, 66 Jüdinnen	279
7.8.41 Utena	485 " , 87 " , 1 Litauer, war Leichenfledderer an deutschen Soldaten	571
8.8.41 Ukmerge	620 Juden, 82 Jüdinnen	702
9.8.41 Kauen-Port IV	484 " , 50 "	534
11.8.41 Panevezys	450 " , 48 " , 1 lit. 1 russ. E.	500
13.8.41 Alytus	617 " , 100 " , 1 Verbrecher	719
14.8.41 Jonava	497 " , 55 "	552
15. und 16.8.41 Rokiskis	3200 Juden, Jüdinnen und J-Kinder, 5 lit. Komm., 1 Pole, 1 Partisane	3 207
9. bis 16.8.41 Kaseiniai	294 Jüdinnen, 4 Judenkinder	298
27.6. bis 14.8.41 Rokiskis	493 Juden, 432 Russen, 56 Litauer (alles aktive Kommunisten)	981
18.8.41 Kauen-Port IV	698 Juden, 402 Jüdinnen, 1 Polin, 711 Intell.-Juden aus dem Ghetto als Repressalie für eine Sabotage- Handlung	1 812
19.8.41 Ukmerge	298 Juden, 255 Jüdinnen, 1 Politr. 88 Judenkinder, 1 russ. Kommunist	645
22.8.41 Dünaburg	3 russ. Komm., 5 Letten, dabei war 1 Mörder, 1 russ. Cardist, 3 Polen, 3 Zigeuner, 1 Zigeunerin, 1 Zigeu- nerkind, 1 Jude, 1 Jüdin, 1 Arme- nier, 2 Politrucks (Gefängnis-über- prüfung in Dünaburg)	21
	-übertrag:	16 152

Figure 14: Jaeger Report, excerpt. Source: The Holocaust History Project: 1-9. The document is available at: <<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/works/jaeger-report/hm/img002.htm.en.html>> (13th July 2017).



The document, known as the Jaeger Report, has the official title *Complete tabulation of executions carried out in the Einsatzkommando 3 zone up to December 1, 1941* (figure 14).<sup>44</sup> The document lists towns in Lithuania in one column, followed by dates in a second, number of Jews in a third and numbers of women, children and others in a fourth. The horror of reading this ordered, comprehensive list of murders carried out over a short period of time in 1941 was overwhelming. Without wanting or intending to, we found out while reading the list that Rokiskis featured as one of the sites. Over the course of two days, 15–16 August 1941, ‘3,200 Jews, Jewesses, and Jewish Children’ were murdered (in addition to more than 1,000 who had been killed in the preceding two months).<sup>45</sup> And in other sources we found out that over 1,000 Jewish people were also killed at nearby Obeliai, where Beinarts also lived.

The actual sites of the murders were woods outside the town, and later I was able to find on a website called the ‘Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania’ the precise sites where the murders took place. The report in the museum notes that the victims “were taken 4.5 km from the town to woods outside the village of Bajorai”.<sup>46</sup> There is a short comment in Jaeger’s notes on how difficult it had been to locate the precise site of the murders and that it was only possible with the assistance of local Lithuanians. The note also highlighted the complicity of Lithuanians in the killings.

In the next room, I saw a photograph of one of these shootings, an image similar to the one described by Jacobson. A row of naked women carrying their babies, also naked, are lined up in a wood. The women are holding the babies in a protective way, as if trying to shield them from what is about to happen. They are about to be shot. Their nakedness makes them extremely vulnerable, and the onlooker must have been aware of the terrible truth of this when taking the photograph, as the women would have been facing a line of men with guns. Jacobson discusses how the photographs could not have been taken in an officially sanctioned way by any correspondent, neutral or otherwise: the German authorities wanted to keep these *Einsatz* actions secret, since they were afraid of the reactions from abroad, the possibility of Jews being forewarned, and the need to preserve the “decency and discipline” of their troops.<sup>47</sup> Jacobson posits that it was ‘sadistic prurience’ that animated the photographer – the photograph was a trophy for future examination.<sup>48</sup>

That the light from the bodies of the women and their babies in that moment was made permanent in the photographic image, which then acts as a referent to the event, seems an act of scarring. It is a trace that wounds and that retains its power to hurt. In wounding in this manner, this photograph is one of Barthes’s *punctums*. Barthes maintained that the *punctum* has an often-metonymic power of expansion. He describes how, on seeing a photograph by Andre

44 Karl Jäger, Commander of the Security Police and the SD, Einsatzkommando 3, *Complete tabulation of executions carried out in the Einsatzkommando 3 zone up to December 1, 1941* (1 December 1941); ‘The Jaeger Report: A chronicle of Nazi mass murder’ (English translation of the report along with scanned images of the original), *Kauen: The Holocaust History Project*, 1–9. The document is available at: <<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/works/jaeger-report/htm/img002.htm.en.html>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

45 ‘Documentation of the Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jewry by the SS Einsatzgruppen (Action Groups)’, from a Secret Reich Letter dated 1 December 1941, from the Remember website, <<http://remember.org/doccs.html>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

46 Ibid.

47 Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 129.

48 Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 130.



Kerterz (1921) of a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy along a dirt road, he recognized “the straggling villages I passed through on my long ago travels in Hungary and Rumania”.<sup>49</sup>

The photograph of the women and their babies in the museum seemed in a horrible way to connect to the family photographs in my archive. In a family archive, a scene of a woman holding a baby might be a photograph that marks a happy point in their lives and the start of a new generation; but instead this photograph is a point of final departure, from which there is no return. More than the list, or the places I have visited on the trip, this image stays with me as knowledge of what our family avoided by leaving.

Later, I found a reference in ‘Out of the Depths’,<sup>50</sup> a document that lists members of the Lithuanian *Yeshiva* (religious schools) who were killed during the Holocaust, to a Shimon Leib Beinart who died, aged 20, in Panevezys, one of the sites listed in Jaeger’s report, in August or September 1941. He was born around the same time as my grandfather and his brothers. That my grandfather grew up in South Africa, and went on to become an anglophone Professor of Law in Cape Town, now seems to be an amazing feat of escape, one dependent on his father Woolf’s decision to migrate.

As we continued our journey, it became clear that the ownership of the tragedy of the Holocaust was a complex issue in Lithuania. The culpability of the Lithuanians who had aided the Nazi Einsatzgruppen in mass murder was often sidelined in favour of a narrative that tells of the genocide of Lithuanian people carried out by the Nazis during the war. The narrative continues with how the oppression carried out by the Soviets during the Russian occupation of Lithuania was felt by Lithuanians, rather than by the Jewish community specifically. Many Lithuanians were deported and, it is claimed, thousands were killed under the Soviet occupation.<sup>51</sup> This is now much emphasized in national history, and, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, it feeds into a narrative of Lithuanian nationalism and identity.<sup>52</sup> But perhaps because of Lithuanian collaboration, and the lack of a Jewish presence after the war, the voice of the Jewish community has been silenced.

Rokiskis Museum is a regional museum, housed in a former country manor and estate at the edge of the town. The museum emphasizes the oppression of Lithuanians by the Russians and the uprisings of Lithuanian nationalists.<sup>53</sup> There is little information provided about the Jewish families who constituted over half the population of the town before the Second World War and who had lived there since the eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup> However, one of the historians at

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49 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 45.

50 Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, ‘Out of the Depths (translation from *Mima’amakim*, published in New York, 1959)’, trans. Yocheved Klausner, p. 282; available from the JewishGen website, <<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/lithuania7/Lithuania7.html#TOC>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

51 See, for example, Dalia Kuodytė, a Member of the Lithuanian Parliament and former Director General of the Centre of Genocide and Resistance (LGGRTC), ‘The tragic story of one third of Lithuania’s population became victims of Soviet terror’, *Vilnews website*, <<http://vilnews.com/2010-12-the-tragic-story-of-how-one-third-of-lithuania-s-population-became-victims-of-soviet-terror>> [accessed 20 December 2017].

52 Daniel Brook, ‘Double genocide’, *Slate*, 26 July 2015, <[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history/2015/07/lithuania\\_and\\_nazis\\_the\\_country\\_wants\\_to\\_forget\\_its\\_collaborationist\\_past.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/07/lithuania_and_nazis_the_country_wants_to_forget_its_collaborationist_past.html)> [accessed 13 July 2017]; Timothy Snyder, ‘Neglecting the Lithuanian Holocaust’, *New York Review of Books*, 25 July 2011, <<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2011/07/25/neglecting-lithuanian-holocaust>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

53 Museum text, Rokiskis Museum.

54 Raphael Julius, ‘Rokishok’ (translation of ‘Rokishok’, a chapter from *Pinkas Hakehillot Lita*) in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), available from <[http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00646.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00646.html)> [accessed 13 July 2017].



the museum told us that her husband knew the locations of the old Jewish cemeteries in the area, and he offered to take us to visit them. We had also been in contact with a genealogist in the United States, Philip Shapiro, who had given us a basic mapping of the town and the location of the Jewish community who once lived there.<sup>55</sup>

### Vilnius: *Starter Culture* and *Khleboslony* (2012)

Before we left Vilnius to travel to Rokiskis, we had made bread with our *Starter Culture* mix, using our South African salt and Lithuanian flour and water (figure 15). The local flour added a new ingredient to the culture, which so far had been made in South Africa, in the UK, and on board ship. We made two loaves to take on our journey to Rokiskis and Obeliai, the town and nearby village from which our research showed that the Beinarts came, and to carry out the *Khleboslony* threshold ritual we first performed at sea, en route to South Africa.<sup>56</sup>

Bread culture is a live organism that needs continual feeding and refreshing with flour and water.<sup>57</sup> When the bread is baked, salt is added not only for flavour but also to tighten the gluten structure, since it strengthens the dough. It also helps the loaf to hold on to the carbon dioxide gas that is formed during fermentation, thereby supporting good volume. A baking website further notes: “Salt also slows down fermentation and enzyme activity in dough. The salt crystals draw water away from their environment (salt is ‘hygroscopic’). When salt and yeast compete for water, salt wins and the yeast is slowed down.”<sup>58</sup> The balance of flour, water and salt is crucial, therefore, to the bread-making process and to the maintenance of the culture.



Figure 15: Baking bread in Vilnius.

Photograph: Rebecca Beinart. Source: author.

55 Conversation with Philip Shapiro via Skype, 27 July 2012.

56 See: Beinart, ‘Origination: Journeying In The Footsteps Of Our Ancestors’, p. 167, 170

57 Andrew Whitley, *DO Sourdough: Slow Bread for Busy Lives* (London: The Do Book Co., 2014).

58 Weekend Bakery website: <<https://www.weekendbakery.com/posts/salt-in-bread-baking-how-much-and-why/>> [accessed 2 August 2017].



As well as referring to bread and salt, *khlebosalny* or *khleb da sol* means a ceremony of welcome, using bread and salt.<sup>59</sup> In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy refers to “the bread and salt of hospitality”,<sup>60</sup> which writer Joanna Trew explains in relation to Slavic culture:

“Across the Slavic world, bread and salt is offered as part of a traditional welcome ceremony. A round loaf of bread is placed on a tray, with a salt-cellar placed on top, or in a hole cut into the bread. Both the tray and the loaf would be highly decorated. The tradition persists to this day, especially at weddings, and during state visits from foreign leaders, where local people dress up in national costume to present the bread and salt.”<sup>61</sup>

Later on our journey, visiting the Bread Museum in St Petersburg, we read that „when a Russian person made a new settlement, they ploughed up a field and sowed bread”,<sup>62</sup> or “sat down on the ground”.<sup>63</sup> In Russian homes, the bread was stored in a special *khlebnya*: “a round or oval box with densely closed cover, placed in a forward corner on a bench under icons. Only the owner of the house could take bread out from it.”<sup>64</sup>

“Bread enshrined both farming and gathering, and it also had certain almost magical properties.”<sup>65</sup>

When I mixed the ingredients by hand in our friend’s kitchen in Vilnius, I thought about the experience of touch. What kind of knowledge is generated through touch? How does touch bring about a different encounter with place, often with something that is visually less present? Making bread in a kitchen in Vilnius, as well as laying salt onto the grass, allowed me to imagine that I was making an intimate and direct connection with our ancestors. Through the action of making, I experienced the touching of substances and surfaces that they may also have touched, and I could understand this as a more direct encounter with the past. A direct encounter through touch has been termed *praesentia* by Kevin Hetherington.<sup>66</sup> According to Hetherington’s idea of *praesentia*, place becomes, through touch, an encounter rather than a representation. Via the material poetics of an artwork, the encounter acts as a reference to and a physical index of place. In the next stage of the journey, we took our bread and salt to the village our ancestors had left in the early 1900s, uncertain as to what we would encounter.

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59 Robert E. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

60 Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. by Amy Mandelker, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 405.

61 Joanna Trew, ‘Review of Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*’, *Bookdrum website*, <<http://www.bookdrum.com/books/war-and-peace/9780199232765/bookmarks-401-425.html?bookId=730>> [accessed 2 August 2017].

62 Bread, meaning various grain crops, including rye, barley, wheat, oats and buckwheat. Source: Museum text, St Petersburg Bread Museum.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Smith and Christian, *Bread and Salt*, p. 65.

66 Kevin Hetherington, ‘Spatial textures: Place, touch, and praesentia’, *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 1933-44, at p. 1937.



### Rokiskis and Obeliai: *Offere II* (2012)

*“In the area beyond Synagogue Gatve, where old wooden houses are laid out along dusty un-tarmacked roads, we find Rokiskis Jewish cemetery. It is overgrown and neglected, mature silver birch trees grow out of some of the graves, the most recent of which date from 1940. The Jewish population ceased to exist here after that. The graves are hard to decipher, Dad traces the fragile letters with his finger, trying to make them out and trying to remember his Hebrew alphabet. Behind us is a hill, overgrown with very tall grasses and wild plants. Our guide Zigmias explains that this is also part of the burial ground. We pick our way gingerly between old graves, buried in vegetation, and half expect to see protruding bones.”*

*“We reach the windmill on the main road, and follow a small track into what seems to be someone’s allotment. Behind the vegetable patch is the Obeliai Jewish cemetery, marked by a wonky picket fence. It looks like a wildflower meadow.”<sup>67</sup>*

We returned to the Obeliai cemetery the next day and combed through headstones in the long grass. We could not find any with our family name. We made a performance, *Offere II*, walking towards each other through the headstones and flowers, and meeting in front of the gravestones to perform the *Khlebosolny* ritual, sharing bread and salt, in an echo of the film

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<sup>67</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, ‘Offere II’, *Origination* (blog), 6 August 2012.

we made at the salt pans in South Africa (figure 16).<sup>68</sup> We did not know for certain if this was where Woolf Beinart was born, but he had lived there at one time and we had brought an offering of salt from the place to which he had emigrated.

After we shared the bread and salt, we sprinkled the rest of the salt from South Africa onto the ground by the gravestones (figure 17).

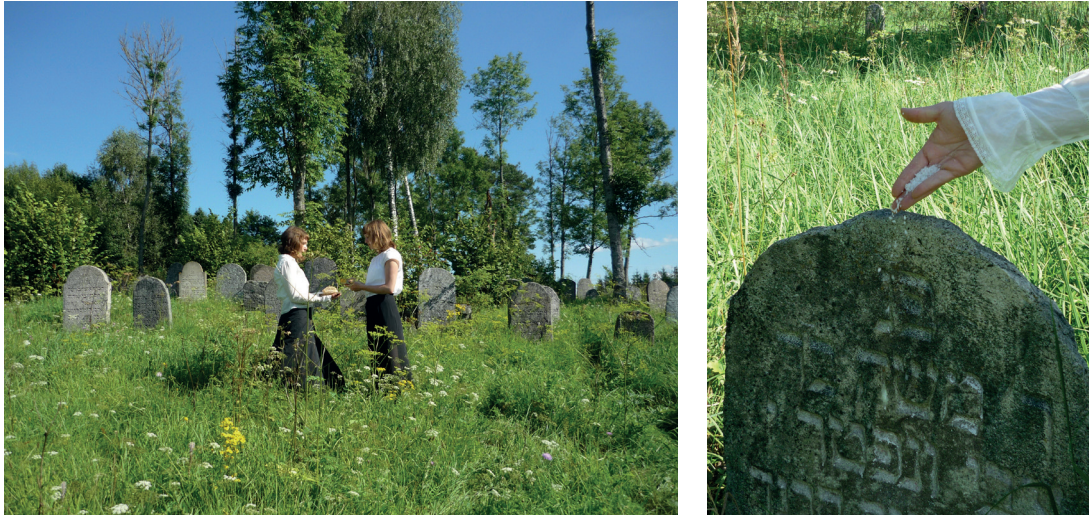


Figure 16: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Offere II*, 2012. Photograph: William Beinart. Source: author. Figure 17: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Sprinkling salt on graves*. Photograph: William Beinart. Source: author.

“The traditional bread and salt ceremony marks the crossing of a threshold, often to a new home. But perhaps we are re-enacting this tradition in reverse: bringing with us the histories of lives that stemmed from this place but were lived out in an unimaginable future. A threshold between different time zones, different possible fates, diverging paths.”<sup>69</sup>

Through the *Khlebosolny* ritual, we experienced space and time through touch and taste, an experience of *praesentia* that, as Hetherington says, mingles distance and proximity; presence and absence; secular and divine; human and nonhuman; subject and object; time and space; vision and touch.<sup>70</sup>

In the mingling of past and present, and of our own identities with others (our ancestors, and others’ ancestors), an understanding of how connected we are to one another develops. In this encounter, the salt (and bread) are indexical to a knowledge or experience of mingling, and of crossing a threshold of some kind. The taste of salt and bread in the ritual, in this site, provides a direct way (through the material) of encountering our ancestors. Tasting this bread and salt in the cemetery site was also a bringing back of a lost culture, which might be seen as a rebalancing act. Through this act, we then hold in our memories the connection to this specific site whenever we repeat the ritual in the future. This is a *praesentia* of memory: an encounter with touch (and taste) that is then sealed as a memory.

68 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Offere I*, 2010.

69 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, ‘Offere II’, *Origination* (blog), 6 August 2012.

70 Hetherington, ‘Spatial textures’, p. 1940.



Before we made the performance, we had set up a camera on a tripod, and William (our father) took photographs from this point. We had wanted to document our action in a replica of the film, *Offere I*, which we had made in South Africa.<sup>71</sup> Our idea had been to take a series of images that could form an animated sequence of our performance. Later, looking at the photographs, I am struck by the *fact* of our father's presence, as photographer, with his gaze on us, the subjects. What strikes me is the absence in a photographic image of the person who takes it, which leaves the viewer to imagine whose gaze it is. In a very different context, the photograph I saw in the Holocaust Museum in Vilnius begs the same question.

In the cemetery we were unable to discover the presence of our ancestors, and in the photograph the viewer is not offered a clue about the identity of the photographer. This lack of visibility of the viewer – his or her obscurity – is concomitant with the search for roots, which is ultimately full of dead ends and disappointments. Do the photographs my father took act as a referent? And if so, to what? They might act as a referent to the site of the cemetery, which stands in for the disappeared who lie in mass graves. They might act as a referent to the spectral traces of these ancestors whose history has been left behind.

Before leaving Rokiskis, we tried to find the memorial site we had been told about by Zigmąs, at Steponi forest, one of the sites where the Jews of Rokiskis and Obeliai were murdered and had been buried. The *Yizkor* book ('memorial' book) for Rokiskis described the locations of the sites:

"In the vicinity of Rokishok there are four communal graves (seven by another account); in Antanosa 5 Km. from Abel (Obeliai), about 200 metres from the left side of the road are buried 1,160 who were murdered on 25.8.1941; in the village of Rozonai about 200 metres to the left, on the road leading to the settlement of Juodupe, are buried 67, murdered in July 1941; in the town of Steponi 5 Km. from Rokishok about 150 metres to the right of the road in the direction of Swedishetz are 981 graves of those also murdered in July /August of 1941; in the forest of Valindova 5 Km. from Rokishok not far from the village of Baiorai, 400 metres to the right of the road which leads to the road to Juodupe, are buried 3207 men, women and children, who were killed on 25-26 August 1941. According to these facts the number of those murdered was between 4,700 to 4,800. After the war, those remaining from the surrounding villages erected monuments over the communal graves. In the Steponi forest the following is inscribed: 'At this spot are buried 981 citizens who were murdered by the fascist German occupiers and nationalist bourgeoisie between 27/6/1941 and 14/8/1941.'<sup>72</sup>

Zigmąs had given us directions, yet we were still unable to locate the site at Steponi. There seemed to be a silence about these sites, and a lack of signage.

On the 'Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania' website, which details locations and information about each site (figure 18), I found directions:

"Go from Rokiškis towards Čedasai. After about 3 km from the city you'll reach the village of Steponys. There are no signs. Pass the first homestead and turn right. The road will take

71 Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Offere I* (2010).

72 Meilech Bakalczuk-Felin (ed.), *Yizkor Book of Rakishok and Environs*, translation of *Yisker-bukh fun Rakishok un umgegnit* (Johannesburg: Yizkor Book Pub. Council, 1952).

you into the forest. In the forest stay on the main road. After you turn left, go about 300 meters and turn left again. At the turn there's a sign prohibiting the burning of grass. The monument is 20 meters away.

Latitude: 56.003617 Longitude: 25.560800<sup>73</sup>

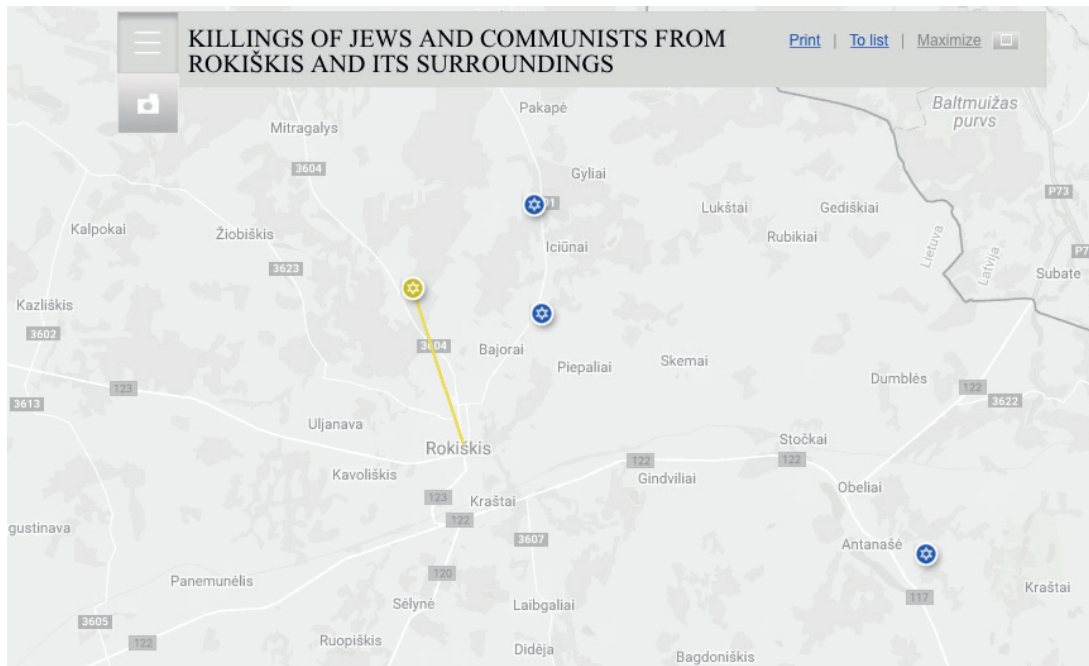


Figure 18: Killing of Jews and Communists from Rokiskis and surrounding area, The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania (screen shot). Source: The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania Website. <[http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a\\_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/](http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/)> (9th August 2017).

This confirmation of the lack of signs reinforced the view I had developed of a wish to forget the Holocaust by contemporary Lithuanian society.

The main holders of the memory of the Jewish communities of Rokiskis and Obeliai remained the *Yizkor* books, which became the memorials, while the physical sites of Jewish homes and the places of their deaths lacked a visible presence of their lives as lived and ending. The *Yizkor* books on the internet are more accessible to a global network of interested people, reflecting the far-flung dispersal of Jewish people, who do not constitute a diaspora from Lithuania because they are not connected with it. The local sites are hidden, possibly suppressed memorials that few encounter, but they are significant partly because they are now known about and publicized online.

## Conclusion

Our actions became a form of postmemory that wove imagined and real histories together. They answered a felt obligation to continue the process both of uncovering the traces of the past

73 (My emphasis in bold.) *The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania Website*, <[http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a\\_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/](http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/)> [accessed 9 August 2017].



and of viewing the past through the eyes of, and in relation to, the present. Using the simple ritual of sharing bread and salt in threshold spaces, we mingled the past and present of our own and others histories. Playing with photographs as documents overlapped pasts and presents, and questioned the photograph as referent instead highlighting the act of memory in making that a photograph offers. The disappointing truth of our journey was that no actual trace of our family remained, so instead we constructed our own story, one which perhaps relates more to the politics of the present day.

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# Border Crossing Trauma Seen Through Hyper-Naturalist Prose and Surreal Forms of Narration

Tuulikki Kurki

- Abstract** This article studies two novels by Karelian writer Arvi Perttu, of 2001 and 2004. These report traumatic experiences that relate to territorial and symbolic border crossings in the Finnish-Russian borderlands, a national border between Finland and Russian Karelia that has been the source and context of significantly traumatic events throughout history. The analysis focuses on narratives and metaphors in Perttu's novels that are representative of border and mobility related traumatic experiences. It is guided by the questions what the often grotesque and surreal representations of trauma in Perttu's works induce readers to see, how the hyper-naturalist prose in Perttu's gloomy and dark works can lead to give it a label, and how his surreal forms of narration function as a form of trauma language.
- Keywords** border crossing, literature, Karelia, memory, nation-building
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.3



*“I swayed between the two worlds, Finland and Russia, west and east, and I now stood on this side of the border, still unsteady.”*

(Konkka 1939, 358).

*“Was that the border river? How insignificant it looked, and how different worlds it demarcated from each other. Two whole worlds. [...] I wish, I could still turn around, and return home [...].”*

(Hurre 1942, 11.)

*“We had entered a strange country. [...] I must say, everything seemed very confusing.”*

(Tuominen 1957, 248).

## Introduction

These examples illustrate the experiences of people who have crossed the Finnish–Russian national border. They emphasize a sense of disorientation associated with border crossing, that is often followed by feelings of instability, homelessness and alienation. After crossing a border, a feeling of disorientation is triggered by the encounter with a “world” that appears strange and curious, almost like a fantasy. These examples show poignantly the multifaceted nature of border crossing experiences that are always subject to physical, emotional and cognitive adjustment, and it is difficult to differentiate these elements from each other (Johnson et al. 2011, 62–63).

In its extremity, border crossing can be a traumatic experience. In a hostile environment, a border crosser can experience or be threatened by witness persecution or even violence. Violence can be targeted at both social and physical bodies, and the violence itself can be both physical as well as discursive, and this has the effects of otherizing, humiliating, and desecrating (Aldama 2003, 8). Furthermore, a border crosser may be forced to permanently leave their home and family, and might not find his or her place in a new country or culture, but rather stay in-between the different cultures, languages and societies. These sudden or insidious border crossing experiences can shatter the border crosser’s worldview and identity, and these are regarded as being central signs of cultural trauma (Sztompka 2004, 158–162, 171–175). In addition to personal experiences, historical events such as wars and border conflicts can traumatize people living in the borderlands. In these cases, so-called trans-historical traumas move from one generation to another and are “reactivated, reconfigured, and transformed in the present” (LaCapra 1999, 700).



Border crossing experiences can vary from the ordinary to the traumatic, and are a highly topical theme in today's world as they represent the everyday lives of millions of people. The recent *International Migration Report* provided by UN, shows that 258 million people have left their homes more or less permanently (United Nations 2017, 4). The reasons for migrating are various, and migrants include people who are forced to migrate because of war, nature catastrophes, persecution, or severe threat of violence. However, migrants also include people who are mobile in their everyday life because of work, leisure, or family circumstances.

This article studies two novels written by Arvi Perttu: *Pain (Kipu 2014)* and *Symposium of Petrozavodsk (Petroskoin symposiumi: 2001)*. These novels address traumatic experiences that relate to territorial and symbolic borders and border crossings of Finnish migrants in the Finnish-Russian borderlands. In Perttu's novels, the traumatic experiences are seen as the results of violence, death and profound changes in the lives of individuals due to border crossings, and are of such magnitude that they cause an "incomparable amount of suffering" so that it is impossible for the individual to "comprehend the experience or to integrate it in the individual's understanding of the world" (Schweiger 2015, 346). In Perttu's novels, the territorial border refers to the national border between Finland and Russia that has been the source and context of several significantly traumatic events throughout history. Symbolic borders refer to various borders emerging in encounters between people, in social and cultural practices, and in different discourses (Johnson et al. 2011, 63).

The analysis focuses on narratives and metaphors in Perttu's novels that are representative of border and mobility related traumatic experiences. The research questions are: What do the representations of trauma, that are often grotesque<sup>1</sup> and surreal<sup>2</sup> in Perttu's works, force readers to see (see Caruth 2008)? How can the hyper-naturalist<sup>3</sup> and grotesque prose that can be used to label Perttu's gloomy and dark works, as well as his surreal forms of narration function as a form of trauma language (Caruth 2011)?

Literature, poetry and art can function as instruments for communicating border and mobility related experiences in more multifaceted ways than the use of everyday language. They can also deepen or enrich our understanding about such experiences. The significance of poetic and artistic representations is that they "can provide moral, political, and aesthetic ways of understanding" and these understandings are never seen as "simple, flat, and formulaic" (Winn 2008, 7). Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests that we can "rediscover the perceived world with the help of modern art and philosophy" (Baldwin 2004, 10). Through artistic representations, we can distance ourselves from our everyday observations and experiences, and study them from different and even surprising viewpoints. As a result, when represented through art, the world

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1 Grotesque refers here to ridiculous, bizarre, extravagant, freakish and unnatural; aberrations from the desirable norms of harmony, balance and proportion (Cuddon 1999, p. 367–368). Sometimes grotesque is used in connection with 'carnevalistic' and 'magic realism'. In literature and art, grotesque is often used as an instrument of societal and cultural criticism

2 Surrealists in art and literature have been interested in expressing the workings of the unconscious mind, in studying dreams and hallucinations, and the threshold of the conscious mind. (Cuddon 1999, p. 882–883.)

3 According to literature researcher Mark Lipovetsky, hyper-naturalist prose was a new version of realism in Russian literature that was introduced in the culture of Perestroika. Typical motifs of hyper-naturalist prose were "everyday cruelty, crimes, tortures, and humiliations of recruits in army, the horror of prisons and other penitentiaries, the ordinary life of homeless derelicts and prostitutes." These motifs "typically evoked anger and moral indignation among the critics and readers." (Lipovetsky 2011, p. 179.)



appears as being “strange” and even “paradoxical” (Baldwin 2004, 10–11). Literature can function as an instrument through which we can study border and mobility related experiences, and take advantage of the unusual and bizarre viewpoints it provides. In some cases, unusual and estranged viewpoints can be the only possible means through which traumatic experiences can be discussed (Whitehead 2004, 83–84).

The theme and viewpoint of the article connect with cultural studies and the multidisciplinary field of border studies, where cultural and humanist approaches have gained more visibility over the past decade (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Konrad and Nicol 2011, 74–75). The aspect of trauma has been noted also in the recent border studies (Wilson & Donnan 2012), and also from the point of view of literature and artistic practices (Kurki 2016b; Ristolainen 2014; Eaton 2003). The theoretical background of the article is based also on multidisciplinary trauma studies. In the 1990s, the early scholarship of multidisciplinary trauma studies was based on the idea that trauma is something unspeakable and un-representable for the person who experiences it. According to literature and trauma researcher Michelle Balaev (2014, 1–2), the idea of un-representability was based on Freud’s theories, and was introduced, for example by theorists such as Cathy Caruth. According to the idea of un-representability, trauma is an unsolved mystery to the unconscious, and it illustrates the inherent conflict between the experience and the language. According to Caruth (1991, 187), the traumatic event cannot be experienced or approached at the moment of its occurrence, and can be sensed and observed only in another place and in another time. Michelle Balaev (as well as other recent multidisciplinary trauma researchers) has challenged the idea of the un-representability of trauma (Balaev 2014, 2–6). In these studies, trauma has been defined and studied from various theoretical viewpoints, and the literature research, has focused for example on the semiotic, rhetorical and social dimensions of trauma. The research has also questioned the universality of trauma features, and focuses on the uniqueness of trauma, its connectedness with societal and cultural contexts, and the relationship between trauma, politics, memory and remembering.

### Traumatic Borderland as a Context for Writing

The Finnish-Russian national border has a long history as being both a porous border that allows mobility across the border, and also as an iron curtain that blocks mobility almost entirely. It has also been a source of various traumas for the people moving across the border and living in the borderland areas. Border shifts have split the borderland area in several different ways during past centuries. The shifting border has thus separated ethnolinguistic and language groups on both sides of the national border [see Fig. 1]. Especially, the



Fig. 1: Russian and Finnish Karelia (grey area).



borderland area of Karelia has become a crystallized example of the Finnish-Russian borderlands as a traumatizing environment that serves also as a stage for Arvi Perttu's novels.

From the 12th century until the early 19th century, Finland belonged to Sweden and the border divided the region of Karelia between Russia and Sweden. During the centuries of Swedish reign, the national border that divided Karelia shifted on several occasions. In 1809, Finland was separated from Sweden and annexed to Russia, where it became an autonomous grand duchy. Then, the whole region of Karelia became part of Russia. In 1917, Finland became independent from Russia, and in 1918, the national border was defined between the two countries, dividing Karelia between Russia and Finland. According to Nick Baron (2007, 24–27), the porousness of the Russia-Finland border is exemplified by the fact that despite its existence, army troops and also civilians continued to move across the border in both directions. This level of mobility decreased significantly after 1922 when Soviet-Russia and Finland signed a treaty that confirmed the border, and border guards were placed to monitor the treaty's enforcement. The border was shifted twice more: first after the so-called Winter War (1939–1940), and a second time after the so-called Continuation War (1941–1944), both of which were fought between Finland and the Soviet Union. After the Continuation War, the border was set in its current location. Today, the border divides Karelia into two halves: Russian and Finnish Karelia, and Karelia thus exists on both sides of the national border.

For the past hundred years, people have migrated across the Finnish-Russian national border in both directions. According to Finnish historians (Rislakki and Lahti-Argutina 1997, 17–19; Paastela 2003, 68, 76–77; Vettenniemi 2004, 47; Engman 2005, 387), approximately 15,000–20,000 people (25,000–30,000 according to some estimations) moved from Finland to the Soviet Union in the early decades of the 20th century. While the reasons for migration were mostly political, many migrants looked to find work and start a new life on the Soviet side of the border. In addition, the wars between Finland and the Soviet Union resulted in a large-scale mobility across the border, where over 400,000 people were evacuated from the borderland and re-settled in other areas of Finland (Raninen-Siiskonen 1999, 15). After the Second World War and up until the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the border between Finland and the Soviet Union functioned as a manifestation of the Cold War. The border, the 'Iron Curtain', effectively hindered mobility across the border. For ordinary citizens, opportunities for interactions across the border were minimal, and what little interaction there was mostly took place through various cultural and political organizations. However, this was a standard practice in other Soviet borderlands, and not restricted to Finland (Chandler 1998, 83). When the Soviet Union disintegrated, the border opened up, and mobility across the border became both livelier and a part of everyday life.<sup>4</sup> During the post-Soviet era, migration from Finland to Russia has been of a low level, involving approximately 6,600 people (Statistics Finland 2016). However, 54,000 people have moved from Russia to Finland (Statistics Finland 2016), and include 30,000 people who moved to Finland as part of the returning migration program launched by the Finnish government in the 1990s. The program allowed Finnish expatriates and people with Finnish ancestry

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4 For example, in 2013, passenger traffic peaked as the Finnish-Russian border was crossed over 13 million times. In 2017, the border was crossed just over nine million times. (Individual border crossings 2012–2017).



living abroad to return to Finland (Ministry of Interior 2009; Ministry of Interior 2010).<sup>5</sup> Among these migrants was the writer Arvi Perttu who moved from Russia to Finland in 2001.

Finnish literature has a long history of describing the historical events, mobility, and life-stories connected with the Finnish-Russian border. These themes have been popular in biographical writing, memoirs, war literature, history writing, as well as in fiction applying a microhistory viewpoint.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the borderland theme has been a popular feature of the so-called regional literature that focuses on former and current ways of life and on cultural traditions in the borderland villages. The Finnish-Russian borderlands have served as a stage for many Arvi Perttu's novels that approach these themes from historical and contemporary perspectives.

Arvi Perttu was born in the town of Petrozavodsk, in Soviet Karelia in the North-West Soviet Union. He started to write in Finnish in the 1980s and established his writing career as a representative of minority language literature in Russia until the 2000s. While in Russia, Perttu published his first novel *Symposium of Petrozavodsk* (2001). In Finland, he has published four novels: *Expedition of Papanin* (Papaninin retkikunta 2006), *Skumbria* (Skumbria 2011), *Pain* (2014), and *Year of the Queen* (Kuningattaren vuosi 2015). Today, Perttu is one of the few actively publishing writers who write in Finnish and originate from Russian Karelia (Kurki 2018, 319–20). His position as a writer provides him with authentic perspectives on the borderlands, its people, and its past and present. Although born in the Soviet Union, Perttu has a Karelian ethnolinguistic background, his mother tongue is Finnish, and he received his education in Russian. In his work as a writer, he sees himself walking a tightrope between at least two, maybe even three cultures, and several languages (Perttu 1998). In his novels, his perceptive viewpoint on the borderlands, its people, history and present situation, simultaneously employs several different and sometimes conflicting viewpoints and cultural codes. Thus, his works provide unique 'multidimensional' (Hicks 1991) insights into life in the borderlands, and deviate from the mainstream literature.

### Hyper-natural and Surreal Representations of Trauma

*Pain* and the *Symposium of Petrozavodsk* look at two significant events in the history of Russia: the civil war that led into the establishment of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1990s. These events are part of the collective and cultural memory in Russia, and also in its neighbouring countries. In his novels, Perttu studies these events from the viewpoints of Finnish and Karelian individuals and migrants who are mobile in the Finnish-Russian borderlands. His works provide us with subversive and supplementary narrative voices that can contribute to the collective and cultural memory of these traumatic events.

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5 Despite changes in the returning migration program, the right of returning migration has remained among the Ingrian Finns and those who served Finnish army abroad in 1939–1945.

6 For example, recent fiction on this theme are: Rosa Liksom's *Hytti n. 6* [Cabin No. 6] (2011), Antti Tuuri's *Ikitie* (Forever road) (2011), Zinaida Lindén's *Nuorallatansija* [Tightrope dancer] (2009), Sirpa Kähkönen's *Vihan ja rakkauden liekit* (Flames of anger and love) (2010) and *Graniittimies* [Granite man] (2014).



### Historical Trauma of a Victim and a Perpetrator in the Borderlands

The historical novel *Pain* discusses the civil war that took place in the early 1920s in Russian Karelia, close to the Finnish–Russian border. The war was merciless as it divided the population and even single families with the question of whether Karelia should join the Soviet regime, remain a separate entity, or join Finland. Part of the population tried to remain neutral, albeit that it was difficult to do so in a world that was at that time divided by strong ideologies and demanded allegiance.

In Russian Karelia, Finnish troops also participated in the war, and fought on both White and Red sides. The driving force of the White Finns was the Greater Finland ideology (in Finnish: *Suur-Suomi-aate*) that had developed already in the 19th century and aimed at unifying all Finno-Ugric peoples living in Finland and elsewhere (Niinistö 2001, 80–83). In the novel *Pain* (Perttu 2014, 21–22), this Greater Finland ideology works as an intoxicating drug that creates enthusiasm and affinity among the White troops and persuades the Finnish soldiers to cross the border. Officially, the task of the White troops was to defend Karelia against Russia, and liberate the Karelian people from Russian rule. This task justified their border crossing, their violence and killing, and the executions of Reds on the Russian side of the border. By leaning on the Greater Finland ideology, White Finns also attempted to annex those areas of Russian Karelia inhabited by Karelians and Finns to Finland (Baron 2007, 25–26).

The novel *Pain* addresses two different traumas in the civil war: the trauma of the victim and also the trauma of the perpetrator. Both traumas are embodied in the narrative of the main protagonist, a Finnish woman Riikka. Riikka participates in the civil war with the White troops. Her personal motive is to revenge on the Reds for a violent attack where her uncle was shot to death, and she was mutilated with a horsewhip. The force behind her actions is her physical and mental pain resulting from these traumatic events. She tries to numb the pain not only by exacting violent actions against the enemy and killing the Reds in a blind fury, but also through a process of self-inflicted pain. As such, pain becomes an instrument for controlling her agony, and she had understood its controlling mechanism at the moment of her uncle's murder and when she became a victim of a violent attack herself.

“The pain was burning, it was almost stunning, but strangely enough it felt somehow good. The pain was the only thing that existed, my uncle's dead body that was sliding down against the wall did not cause agony, there was no fear. There was only pain.” (Perttu 2014, 46.)

“Riikka wished that she could shoot all the prisoners herself, but she was just one of the eight volunteers. Each of the volunteers should aim at one prisoner. [...] Riikka did not feel anything. She looked at the men who were bustling at the cliff edge. She did not understand what they were doing. The pain inside her did not let go. It was not replaced by another pain that she wished for. The new pain would have erased all that which cluttered her memory and did not leave room for anything new. She had just killed a man, and now the body was pushed over the cliff's edge into a roaring torrent.” (Perttu 2014, 57–58.)

Like other Finnish soldiers, Riikka at first supports the ideology of Greater Finland. However, the ideological intoxication evaporates during her fights with the enemy, and the emptiness and meaninglessness



of the war is revealed. When the “war blindness” (Caruth 2008, 153) caused by the ideology disappears, Riikka and the soldiers understand their overwhelming situation. At first they thought that they were doing the right thing and their actions were justified, but when surrounded by death and mutilated bodies, they come to understand that they were wrong. The soldiers see themselves only as killers, and not as the defenders of some noble ideology: their task is only to kill others and try to survive.

“This was the war, you could not follow any rules, and the war could not have any logic. Riikka felt that the feeling of emptiness that now filled her, killed her hopes of curing her internal pain. From now on, there was just new pain that would not erase the old one; the pain just piled up. [...] The war expedition did not have any goal anymore; the purpose was just to kill others and survive.” (Perttu 2014, 60.)

When the insanity and meaninglessness of the war is revealed to the soldiers, they feel betrayed. The trauma and betrayal (Caruth 2008; Freyd 1998) manifests itself in feelings of emptiness, cumulating physical pain, and mental agony. Along with the other soldiers, Riikka tries to numb the agony with self-inflicted sadomasochistic pain, including whipping, tying with ropes, drugs, and sex.

“Riikka remembered the nights with Raivola [another soldier] flavoured with cocaine, bizarre love scenes that did not result in anything, but still she missed them. [...]. Or was it cocaine that she was missing? Raivola always had cocaine, and Riikka was ready to do anything for a fix.” (Perttu 2014, 103.)

“Why was she here? There was no rational explanation. She had made up all of this just to fill the empty feeling in her soul. Only because of her pain was she here, she was not taking revenge, but numbing her own pain.” (Perttu 2014, 105.)

“Was this just a game or some kind of an experiment? Riikka thought when the whip moved from Raivola’s hand into hers. Changing the roles was not difficult, after she had already had her satisfaction. [...] Did she wish to have a punishment for her sins, or was this just an experiment to explore her own dark side in a safe environment? [...] It had been real pain, liberating pain, and now she was able to imagine herself as the absolute ruler of pain [...]. (Perttu 2014, 239.)

In the midst of war and violence, Riikka experiences a move from the real world into a surreal world. This takes place when she experiences a move into Kazimir Malevich’s painting *Black Square* (*Chernyi kvadrat*, 1915). *Black Square* represents an abstract art movement Suprematism initiated by Malevich in Russia. It focussed on pure geometric forms such as square and circle that were thought to be universally comprehensible forms (Drutt 2003). The painting *Black Square* has been interpreted as signifying eternity, emptiness and depth (Esanu 2013, 84–85), and in the novel, starts to symbolize Riikka’s experiences in the war and her existence in the world (Perttu 2014, 12). In her experiences, the war had changed the world entirely and profoundly, and therefore, the world could no longer be depicted through traditional art forms. Only abstract art could provide instruments for depicting this new, changed world. The



new world appeared to Riikka as a place where the previous forms of harmony and balance had disappeared, and this was akin to how *Black Square* had deviated from previous art forms (Perttu 2014, 50).

“She felt that she was on the shore, on the edge of an abyss, ready to fall into the emptiness, death and eternity that would not give her oblivion, but eternal pain. In St. Petersburg, almost three years ago, she stood in the front of Malevich’s *Black Square* for a long time, and did not understand it. Now she knew that the war had changed the world entirely, and it could not be described with the traditional means of art, because the world had contracted or expanded into a black square. In her case, it was bloody red.” (Perttu 2014, 12.)

As the chaos of the war continues, the painting *Black Square* starts to represent the world in which Riikka acts and orients herself. In her mind, the geometrical shapes and colours of the painting parallel the world around her that has become incomprehensible in her experience. The young men who she is about to execute parallel cardboard pictures, inanimate targets, and shooting them does not disturb her conscience.

“Somehow, it was connected with this time, this space, and the war. She felt that she was inside Malevich’s painting, the world around her was like even, bright surfaces: red, black, squares, circles, and sharp lines piercing them. The former harmony had disappeared, and could not exist anymore.” (Perttu 2014, 50.)

“These young men were only cardboard figures, just like targets. She tried to look inside them, but she saw through them like a bullet.” (Perttu 2014, 50.)

During the fighting, the enemy captures Riikka. During her captivity, she falls in love with one of the enemy, a Karelian named Santeri. For both of them, the situation stirs up contradictory and frustrating feelings of simultaneous love and hatred towards each other, as well as simultaneous feelings of fear and pleasure. However, the relationship inevitably leads to their ultimate destruction. Experiences of frustration and the impossibility of their relationship are summarized in the metaphor of a red square that also refers to Malevich’s painting. Riikka and Santeri had voluntarily locked themselves inside the building to fulfil their sexual, sadomasochistic fantasies, but they wake up as a fire rages outside, and the flames become visible in the window revealing the red square in front of their eyes. The enemy is outside, there is no chance of escape, so they face their inevitable death. Thus, the red square becomes the ultimate symbol of destruction, death, eternity, and of simultaneous pain and pleasure.

“The window looks red, was it the morning sun? Santeri woke up, but it felt like the dream was continuing, and now turning into a nightmare. Angry shouting and random gunshots were audible outside. [...] The smoke became thicker, and it entered the room through the same cracks in the wall where the freezing breeze had entered earlier. Smoke came through the broken window where the flames were now visible. [...] The world was not black anymore, but it was in the colour of blood and fire, and it was hot. The red square was a burning window, an entrance to death, coloured with blood.” (Perttu 2014, 389.)



Personal trauma, both the trauma of a victim and of a perpetrator, changed Riikka's experience of the world and her idea of herself. For her, the world became distorted, twisted in proportions, and lost its harmony. Riikka knows that her old self has changed permanently, and there is no chance of return. She recognizes herself not only as a victim, but also as a perpetrator. She tries simultaneously to understand these experiences and also to forget them. Through the painting *Black Square*, her internal pain and the chaotic world she inhabits translates into the language of modern art, in the forms of abstractions, controlled shapes and colours. The similar symbol of a burning window which appears as a red square, is also a symbol of her death, a tragic combination of pain and pleasure together with her enemy that finally relieves her from her agony.

### Crossing Symbolic Borders: A Distorted Mirror and a Claustrophobic Corridor

Symposium of Petrozavodsk (2001) examines the symbolic border crossing from the Soviet to the post-Soviet eras. It depicts the end of the 1980s in the town of Petrozavodsk, in the North-West Soviet Union when the Soviet Union is disintegrating. The events are narrated through the viewpoint of a writer Pauli who is also encountered as a Fool. Together with his friends, Pauli tries to control personal and professional aspects of his life, but life gradually turns into a nightmare. Their attempts to control their lives are connected with the problematic position of the Finnish ethnonational minority in the Soviet Union; a group of border crossers that Pauli also represents. The place of the ethnonational group is disappearing and becoming non-existent in the Soviet Union and Russia, as well as in Finland, and in effect, they are not welcome "here" nor "there" (Perttu 2001, 110). The realization of not having a place or home is a traumatic experience for Pauli.

In addition, the transition from the Soviet era to the post-Soviet era is depicted as an overwhelming experience that becomes a principal factor in defining the identities and life courses of Pauli and his friends. In Russian society, this transition has generally been described as a traumatic experience that profoundly changed the lives of all Soviet citizens, and shattered the former Soviet identities (Sztompka 2004, 158–162, 171–175). The situation has demanded the creation of new history narratives, and also the formation of new identities for former Soviet citizens. What is controversial in this traumatic event is that whilst nearly everyone saw the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a positive event, very few Soviet citizens were prepared to live in a society that had changed so profoundly after the collapse had taken place (Sztompka 2004, 171). Arvi Perttu uses the metaphors of a broken mirror and a dark, claustrophobic corridor when examining individuals' experiences of their disintegrating society and also when crossing the symbolic border to the post-Soviet era.

In the novel, the surrounding society is in a state of chaos, and both the past and the future have turned out to be illusionary concepts as the Soviet Union disintegrates. The idea of a shared Soviet space is also deconstructed (Beumers 2012), and in the midst of the chaos, Pauli comprehends that his life is also disintegrating and he becomes unsure of his identity: "I cannot perceive the multiplicity of the world, and therefore, my normal state of mind is confusion and irresolution" (Perttu 2001, 11). He studies himself in a broken bathroom mirror where his unrecognizable image is mirrored countless times, and he sees an image of an old lady replacing his face. The situation makes him doubt his own sanity, and ponder which of the images is real



and which an illusion. The situation also makes him doubt that he exists any longer: “I know well this state of mind when I am not sure of my existence, it feels like the old lady in the mirror is livelier than me, or do I see myself in her figure – my loneliness, my redundancy, and my immeasurable age [...]” (Perttu 2001, 30).

As the disintegration proceeds, Pauli enters into surreal spaces. Especially, he finds himself in a claustrophobic, dark and dirty staircase, with no exit doors, and the staircase continues deeper and deeper underground. He is scared, but continues to descend. On one of the landings, he meets himself as a Fool who is trying to get upwards towards the surface.

“I am not listening to the end, I don’t answer, I rush down, leaping over several steps with one stride. [...]. But when the first floor is over, the stairs do not end and there is no exit. One staircase after the other follows, and I descend deeper and deeper. On one of the landings, I meet Fool. [...] I knew that Fool had already been there for long time trying to ascend these dark and dirty steps. [...] Ominous shades were haunting the darkness, but a faint beam of light came down somewhere from above. He was not scared of the future but of the past.” (Perttu 2001, 201.)

Finally, Pauli enters a corridor that symbols the transition from the Soviet past to the unknown future. The underground corridor is about to collapse, and it is dark. People run within it, but one must not fall, because they will be trampled to death by the others. The past appears as a black chasm at the back of the corridor, and the future glimmers faintly at the front, appearing as a “ghostly memory” of the light. Pauli is scared and horrified, but the dream of a better life pushes him forward. (Perttu 2001, 217.)

“An endless, narrowing corridor, black holes in its walls are entrances to other worlds, but Fool is afraid to approach them even though he knows that there is the light. Sunlight comes through the tiny holes, but can you be sure that the light is not only neon light?” (Perttu 2001, 217–218.)

The metaphors of the broken mirror and the claustrophobic corridor reflect the border crosser’s experience within time and space, where the relationship between past, present and future becomes problematic and ambivalent. The surrounding world has also become difficult to perceive and comprehend. Crossing the symbolic border detaches Pauli from the familiarities of coherent time and place. On the one hand, the past represents something frightening and strange that Pauli wishes to leave behind, yet on the other, the chaotic present makes Pauli feel nostalgic towards the past, because it, nevertheless, represented a time when the worldviews and identities were able to be formed as coherent entities.

The relationship with the future is also problematic. Pauli’s future plans were based on the promises that Soviet socialism promised for all Soviet citizens. However, the promises were never fulfilled. Therefore, Pauli moves in a paradoxical reality of time and place: it is after the future that never came true (Epstein 1995, 72–73). The experienced time, “after the future” (Epstein 1995) is a shared experience with other Soviet citizens who experienced the collapse of the Soviet Union. The events leave Pauli without a clear idea about where he comes from and where he is heading to. At the same time, a coherent narrative chain from the past to the future is broken. In effect, there is no structured world or narrative that could function as a basis for



Pauli's identity, and the present that is created by the disintegration appears as being broken, empty, and artificial (Epstein 2000, 4–7).

The relationship between these new identities and the past is necessarily ambivalent. The new identity attempts to separate itself from the past and stresses the separation between the post-Soviet and Soviet era. Yet, at the same time, the new identity also creates connections with the past (Beumers 2013, 3). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, some of the former Soviet citizens felt estranged by the Soviet past, and some former Soviet states tried to forget their Soviet past as soon as possible (Abashin 2012, 153–154). However, returning to the past and an open and honest discussion of it turned out to be crucial for the formation of new post-Soviet identities (Shneidman 1995, 6; Abashin 2012, 153–154). Thus, an increasing ambivalence emerged where the Soviet past could simultaneously appear as a traumatic experience and also as a source of nostalgia for the former Soviet citizens (Beumers 2013, 3; Aarelaid-Tart 2006, 35).

The world that opens after crossing the border appears incomprehensible, and the corridor ends in a surreal room: “Fool knows that he was to be arrested, but again he was not noticed, and he jumps out of the window and falls, falls like in an endless childhood nightmare...” (Perttu 2001, 218).

The surreal room reflects an experience of the world that reveals itself after the disintegration process. The disintegration did not necessarily lead to the better future that Perestroika promised, and instead the future appears very uncertain. The world that Pauli recognizes after reappearing from the corridor seems chaotic, fragmentary and gloomy, where the distinction between the dream reality and the reality we experience in our everyday lives becomes blurred.

## Discussion

In both *Pain* and *Symposium of Petrozavodsk*, crossing the territorial and symbolic border creates experiences that disturb the border crosser's sense of time and place, and force the border crosser to redefine his or her identity. After the border crossing, the experienced time and place become ambivalent and surreal, as the border crosser moves in a state of uncertainty, confusion and extreme discomfort. Not being able to comprehend the radically changed situation, the border crosser moves in a trauma space that is located outside the present state of the world that is real to others in their everyday lives. These traumatic spaces are located in intoxicating fantasy, artwork, in surreal tunnels and rooms, or in distorted reflections in a mirror. The identity of the traumatized border crosser is also based outside the coherent experiences of place and time. This is typical when processing traumatic experiences, where the distinctions between the past and the present may become blurred (LaCapra 1999, 699). According to Schweiger (2015, 347), “Traumatic events defy comprehension and cannot be overcome or integrated meaningfully within ordinary cognitive structure through simple recollection”. Literature researcher Kerstin Bergman (2008, 148) suggests that every fiction work represents its “own theory” of remembering and representing trauma. As an example, she mentions a flashback that has represented the remembering of trauma in films, prior to the formulation of modern trauma theories. It can be suggested that grotesque, hyper-natural and surreal narrative elements can also provide “theories” or a “language” of remembering and representing individual, collective



and cultural traumas. Thus, novels can also be understood in the context of 'trauma fiction', which often emulates the traumatic experience and its further processing and narrativization (Whitehead 2004).

Traditionally, trauma narratives stress the idea of witnessing. A witness can be seen as someone who has observed an event with his or her own eyes, and speaks out and gives testimony (Nünning 2008, 137). In Perttu's novels, witnessing is not an elementary question, although his historical novels apply documentary material, and he himself has lived through the disintegration of the Soviet Union and moved to live in another country. However, as cultural researcher, and literature researcher Vera Nünning suggests (2008, 137), the traditional definition of a witness may be too narrow when applied to trauma fiction or artistic works representing traumatic events. Nünning (2008, 123–125) also suggests that works of popular culture that are not based on eyewitness narratives can still have a significant impact on remembering and processing collective traumas. According to Nünning (*ibid.*), the representations provided and repeated by popular culture can strengthen the role and significance of some trauma representations, as part of the collective and cultural memory.

Fiction can also be understood as the narratives of secondary witnesses (LaCapra 1999, 699) and as post-memory (Hirsch 2008). In this context, works of fiction can be understood as emphatic expressions and reactions to the past occurrences they feature (LaCapra 1999, 699). Fiction can also provide more multifaceted understandings of traumas and their consequences. In Perttu's novels, hyper-natural elements, grotesque and surreal elements form narrative strategies that Perttu uses to create confusion, in order to illustrate the perplexities of the traumatizing events that are seldom cognizable in a coherent manner. The repulsive and confusing elements in Perttu's novels also diversify the dominant and standardized narratives and understandings of various well-known historical traumas and their consequences in Finnish-Russian territorial and symbolic borderlands. Often, these standardized documentary narratives (for example about the civil war) are based on the detailed accounts of places, people and listings of events, based on external observations. The worlds depicted in Perttu's novels follow the scheme of using hyper-natural prose and its violent, gloomy, and pessimistic worlds, that show the individual's struggle for survival. Hyper-natural prose was introduced in Russian postmodernism in the 1990s, and depicts for example the everyday cruelty, the horrors of prisons, the life of derelicts and prostitutes, and the corporeality of people, in ways that are often despised (Lipovetsky 2011, 179). According to literature researcher Mark Lipovetsky (2011, 179–180), the purpose of hyper-natural prose is to open past traumas to discussion, by introducing shocking and sometimes repulsive depictions. Readers' critical reactions indicate that the use of hyper-natural prose has touched the traumas that have been previously buried in the collective consciousness. This possibility to shock and create confusion is also inherent in the reception of Perttu's works. Ultimately, the shocking and repulsive, as well as, grotesque and surreal elements of his novels offer the possibility to influence the construction and processing of the collective and cultural memory of traumatic events that occurred in the Finnish-Russian borderlands.

Perttu's novels provide unique perspectives on events and life in the Finnish-Russian borderlands. His unique perspective is possible because his works can be understood as being multi-dimensional texts that are typical of border writing (Hicks 1991). This multi-dimensionality means that Perttu's works connect with various writing traditions on different sides



of the national border, and apply several cultural codes when writing about the history and contemporary border crossers in the Finnish–Russian borderlands (Kurki 2018, 352–53). Due to the multi-dimensionality of his novels, the representations of the traumatic events can be understood from several simultaneous, and sometimes contradictory, viewpoints. This can promote discussions on trans-historical traumas and the formation of the post-memory (Hirsch 2008, 105) of the traumatizing events.

One of the contributions of Perttu's novels in constructing collective and cultural memory lies dormant in the idea of hyperspace. In this article, hyperspace is seen as a de-territorial space that is based on the traumatic experiences associated with the shared border and related mobility (Kurki 2016a; Kurki 2018, 351–52; Kurki and Kaskinen 2019, forthcoming). This hyperspace can emerge virtually, for example, in an artwork and the reception of the artwork in an installation space. The hyperspace can serve as a basis for constructing borderland, traumatic, and mobile identities. This definition comes close to the idea of a cyber space as a means to share and understand trauma, as introduced by Michelle Balaev: "Trauma is understood by locating its meaning in the new space of the internet – cyber space – that redefines the meaning of traumatic memory and its impact on identity" (Balaev 2014, 19). Hyperspace includes the elements of both the 'hyperspace' and 'hyperscape', as defined by literature scholars Fredrik Jameson (1991, 15–16) and Hazel Smith (2000, 54–56), as well as by folklorist Tok Thompson (2013). The hyperspace can be seen as "a new type of textual, political, and subjective space," where individuals do not necessarily hold a stable position for themselves, or cannot orient in that space (Jameson 2009, 15–16; Smith 2000, 1, 54–56). The hyperspace can function as a basis for decentred, de-territorial, and emergent identities, and a basis for re-defining traumatized identities. Therefore, the concept of hyperspace may challenge the territorially or nationally oriented definitions of identity that often tend to homogenize the identities of people living in various borderland areas. When the experiences of the border crossers and their traumatic experiences come to the fore, emphatic understandings of mobility and border crossing can be created. This can also increase the understanding of mobility experiences in today's world. The dominating discourses on borders, borderlands, mobility and migrating people do not always recognize the micro-level experiences and understandings about borders and mobility. Nevertheless, a recognition of these micro-level experiences and understandings are vital for the border crosser's survival and their future life after their overwhelming experiences, as well as providing a means for understanding the trans-historical traumas which occur at various borderlands.

### Acknowledgments

This article is part of the research project *Traumatized Borders: Reviving Subversive Narratives of B/Order, and Other* (Project number SA 297533).

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# Rajan ylittäjän trauma hypernaturalistisessa proosassa ja surrealistisessa kerronnassa

## Extended Abstract [Finnish]

Tuulikki Kurki

Suomen ja Venäjän välisellä rajalla on pitkä historia sekä huokoisena rajana, joka sallii liikkumisen rajan yli, että rautaesirippuna, joka estää liikkumisen lähes kokonaan. Raja on myös ollut monien traumaattisten kokemusten lähde ihmisille, jotka liikkuvat rajan yli tai elävät rajaseudulla. Parin viime vuosisadan aikana tehdyt rajan siirrokset ja sodat ovat esimerkiksi halkoneet nykyistä Venäjän ja Suomen välistä rajaseutua monin eri tavoin ja jakaneet samaakin etnokansallista ryhmää tai kieliryhmää edustavia ryhmiä vaihtelevasti eri puolille valtion rajaa.

Tämä artikkeli *tarkastelee* Venäjän Karjalasta lähtöisin olevan ja Suomessa vaikuttavan kirjailijan Arvi Pertun 2000-luvuilla julkaisemaa kahta teosta: Venäjällä julkaistua romaania *Petroskoin symposiumi* (2001) ja Suomessa julkaistua romaania *Kipu* (2014). Arvi Perttu syntyi vuonna 1961 luoteisessa Neuvostoliitossa, Petroskoissa, Venäjän Karjalassa. Hän alkoi kirjoittaa suomeksi 1980-luvulla ja loi kirjailijauraansa suomenkielisen vähemmistökirjallisuuden edustajana Venäjällä 2000-luvun taitteeseen saakka. Vuonna 2001 Perttu muutti Suomeen, ja on jatkanut kirjailijanuraansa Suomessa. Tällä hetkellä Perttu on yksi harvoista aktiivisista suomenkielellä kirjoittavista kirjailijoista, jotka ovat lähtöisin Venäjän Karjalasta. Hänen positionsa rajaseudulla ja rajan yli liikkuvana henkilönä on myös tutkimuksellisesti kiinnostava. Perttu on syntynyt Venäjällä, hänellä on karjalaiset etnokansalliset sukujuuret, mutta hänen äidinkieltensä on suomi. Hän on kuvannut työssään tasapainoilevansa kahden – jopa kolmen – kulttuurin rajoilla ja eri kielten rajoilla. Hänen teoksissaan rajoja, rajaseudun ihmisiä, mennyttä ja nykypäivää tarkasteleva analyttinen näkökulma avautuukin rajan yli molempiin suuntiin, moninäkökulmaisesti ja moniäänisesti.

Romaanit *Petroskoin symposiumi* ja *Kipu* käsittelevät alueellisten ja symbolisten rajojen ylityksiin kytkeytyviä traumaattisia kokemuksia Suomen ja Venäjän rajaseudulla. *Petroskoin symposiumi* käsittelee Neuvostoliiton hajoamista suomalaistaustaisen, vähemmistöä edustavan yksilön Paulin näkökulmasta kerrottuna. *Kipu* puolestaan käsittelee suomalaisen naisen Riikan osallistumista Venäjän Karjalan sisällissotaan 1920-luvulla. Teoksissa rajoihin kytkeytyvät traumaattiset kokemukset liittyvät väkivaltaan, kuolemaan sekä elämän ja maailmankuvan perustavanlaatuisen muutokseen. Nämä traumaattiset kokemukset aiheuttavat kokijalleen merkittäviä henkisiä tai fyysisiä kärsimyksiä, ja kokijan on vaikea sulauttaa kokemaansa osaksi



omaa ymmärrystään maailmasta. Tässä artikkelissa analyysin kohteena ovat teoksissa *Petro-skoin symposiumi* ja *Kipu* esiintyvät erilaiset narratiivit ja kuvastot, jotka ilmentävät rajoihin ja liikkumiseen kytkeytyviä traumaattisia kokemuksia.

Artikkeli tarkastelee kysymyksiä: Kuinka kirjallisuus, muiden taiteiden ohella, voi syventää ymmärrystämme liikkumiseen ja rajojen ylittämiseen liittyvistä traumaattisista kokemuksista? Mitä välähdyksenomaiset traumaattisten kokemusten hypernaturalistiset representaatiot, jotka Pertun teoksissa ovat usein groteskeja, jopa pornografisia ja surrealistisia pakottavat tekstien lukijan näkemään? Miten hypernaturalismi ja surrealistiset kerronnan keinot voivat toimia trauman kielenä? Miten Pertun teokset osallistuvat rajaseudun traumaattisiin kokemuksiin liittyvän kollektiivisen ja kulttuurisen muistin tai transhistoriallisen trauman rakentamiseen?

Teoreettiselta taustaltaan ja tarkastelutavoiltaan artikkeli kytkeytyy kulttuurintutkimukseen, monitieteiseen traumatutkimukseen ja monitieteiseen rajatutkimukseen. Monitieteisen traumatutkimuksen kentällä, artikkeli kytkeytyy viimeaikaiseen keskusteluun trauman representoimisen mahdollisuudesta ja muistamisen politiikasta. Aihepiirinsä puolesta artikkeli niveltyy myös monitieteisen rajatutkimuksen kenttään, jossa kulttuurinen ja humanistinen näkökulma ovat vahvistuneet viime vuosina.

Artikkelin analyysiosio osoittaa, että Pertun teoksissa traumatisoiva alueellisten ja symbolisten rajojen ylittämistä seuraavat traumaattiset tapahtumat sekoittavat rajan ylittäjän ajan ja paikan kokemisen ja pakottavat rajan ylittäjän määrittelemään identiteettinsä uudelleen. Rajan ylittämistä seuraavien tapahtumien myötä rajan ylittäjä siirtyy epävarmuuden, hämmennyksen ja äärimmäisen epämukavuuden tilaan. Hänen kokemansa aika ja paikka muuttuvat monitulkintaisiksi ja surrealistisiksi. Koska rajan ylittäjä ei pysty käsittelemään rajan ylittämisen jälkeen tapahtunutta traumatisoivaa tilannetta, hän siirtyy niin sanottuun traumatilaan, joka sijoittuu reaali maailman ulkopuolelle. Nämä traumatilat sijoittuvat Pertun teoksissa humalluttaviin fantasioihin, taideteosten maailmaan, surrealistisiin tunneleihin ja huoneisiin, tai vääristäviin peileihin. Myös rajan ylittäjän identiteetti rakentuu uudelleen koherentin paikan ja ajan kokemisen ulkopuolelle. Tämä on tyypillistä traumaattisten kokemusten prosessoinnissa, jossa menneen ja nykyhetken väliset erottelut voivat hämärtyä.

Groteskin, hypernaturalismin ja surrealismien avulla Perttu herättää lukijassa hämmennystä ja ihmettelyä, ja näin vaikuttaa rajaseudulla rakentuvan, traumaattisia tapahtumia käsittelevän kollektiivisen muistin rakentumiseen. Shokeeraavan, lukijassa paikoitellen vastenmielisyyttä herättävän kuvaustavan yhtenä tavoitteena on avata menneen kollektiiviset traumat keskustelun kohteeksi. Voidaan ajatella kirjallisuudentutkija Kerstin Bergmanin tavoin, että jokainen kaulokirjallinen teos tarjoaa omanlaisensa ”teorian” trauman muistamiseen ja representoimiseen. Tämä artikkeli ehdottaakin, että hypernaturalismi, groteski ja surrealistinen kerronta voivat myös tarjota fiktiokirjallisuudessa mahdollisen ”teorian” trauman representoimiseen ja käsittelemiseen. Ne voivat toimia myös osana trauman kieltä, jonka avulla yksilöllisiä, kollektiivisia ja kulttuurisia traumoja voidaan tehdä näkyväksi ja käsitellä julkisesti.

Pertun teokset pyrkivät myös rikkomaan ja moniäänistämään aiempia rajaseutuun kytkeytyneitä kollektiivisia historianarratiiveja. Rajan yli liikkuvien ihmisten kokemuksen ja tunteiden nostaminen tarkastelun keskiöön, voi avata mahdollisuuden kriittisten äänien esiin nousemiselle. Kriittiset äänet kohdistuvat dominoivia diskursseja vastaan, jotka ovat usein pyrkineet yhdenmukaistamaan rajaseuduilla olevien väestöryhmien identiteettejä ja kulttuurimuotoja



sekä laajempiakin kansakunnan historianarratiiveja. Yhdenmukaistavat diskurssit ovat usein luotu hallinnollisista keskuksista käsin, eivätkä ne aina tunnista mikrotason ymmärryksiä rajoista tai alueisiin kiinnittymättömiä, liikkumiseen ja traumaan perustuvia identiteettejä ja kulttuurimuotoja, jotka ilmenevät erilaisilla rajaseuduilla. Pertun romaanien kontribuutio kollektiivisen muistin, kulttuurisen muistin rakentamiseen voidaan nähdä olevan myös eräänlaisen hypertilan rakentumisessa hänen teoksissaan. Hypertila on alueeseen kytkeytymätön tila ja se rakentuu esimerkiksi yksilöiden jakamien, rajaan ja rajan ylittämiseen liittyvien traumaattisten kokemusten varaan. Hypertila voi rakentua virtuaalisesti esimerkiksi taideteoksessa ja sen vastaanotossa, ja se voi muodostua uudenlaisten traumaattisten identiteettien rakentamisen perustaksi ja johonkin kuulumisen perustaksi.

Kokonaisuudellaan artikkeli pyrkii osallistumaan keskusteluun siitä, kuinka rajoihin ja liikkumiseen kytkeytyvän kirjallisuuden, runouden ja taiteen tutkiminen voivat avata syvempää ymmärrystä rajoista, rajojen ylittämisen kokemuksista. Lisäksi kirjallisuus ja muut taiteet voivat lisätä ymmärrystä rajaseutujen historiallisista ja rajaseuduilla parhaillaan käynnissä olevista erilaisista identiteettien määrittelyprosesseista.

### **Mainittut teokset**

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Perttu, Arvi. 2014. Kipu (Helsinki: Myllylahti).



**DOI:** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.4

**Extended Abstract of:**

Tuulikki Kurki, 'Border Crossing Trauma Seen Through Hyper-Naturalist Prose and Surreal Forms of Narration', *Mobile Culture Studies. The Journal* 4, 2018, 39-56. <<http://unipub.uni-graz.at/mcsj>>

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# Parading in the city's public space: Migrant Belonging through the Hare Krishna festivities<sup>1</sup>

Debora Baldelli

**Abstract** The cosmopolitan character of Lisbon along with the process of *touristification* and gentrification of the city in the past ten years has changed its cultural activities. It also influenced the way in which the Lisbon City Council decided to integrate (or not) immigrant communities into a social and cultural policy focusing on “interculturality”. Immigrant neighbourhoods become tourist districts with “diversity”, changing the inhabitants’ very relationship with the city. Through the Yatra Ratha Festival, Hare Krishna devotees and Hindu immigrants together appropriate the public space to express themselves in the city where they live. I propose to discuss the role of performance in the public space as an expressive practice that provides moments of union between a diverse group of immigrants living in Lisbon who, despite having similar religious practices associated with Hinduism, belong to different religious groups and countries of origin. I argue that through the Ratha Yatra, participatory performance in the form of collective mantras, singing and dancing, becomes fundamental to creating a sense of belonging to the city of Lisbon.

**Keywords** migration; performance; Hare Krishna; public space; expressive practices

**DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.5

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my doctoral thesis entitled “Spiritual and expressive practices in a migratory context: an ethnography of the Hare Krishna Movement in the city of Lisbon”, at the New University of Lisbon, 2017, funded by Capes (11871-20); and an unfolding project focused on the Ratha Yatra Festival I developed independently after my viva.



I propose to discuss how participatory performance can become fundamental to creating a sense of belonging to a very diverse group of immigrants in the city of Lisbon. In order to do that, I focus on how identities and the sense of belonging are experienced by the Hare Krishna devotees and the Hindu community through their collective mantras, singing and dancing activities in Lisbon's public space.

The Hare Krishna Movement was created from a Hindu tradition, which does not necessarily imply that the spiritual practice is part of Hinduism. Hare Krishna "Movement" is how devotees refer to the spiritual practice to which they belong. When the religious practice was registered in 1966 in the United States as ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, its founder, defined the practice as a "spiritual movement". Among devotees of Lisbon, the Hare Krishna Movement is more commonly referred to as a "cultural movement". The adoption of the term "movement" is also associated with the movement (motion) of its founder from India to the United States for the propagation of their spiritual practice and sending devotees to other countries to spread Krishna's teachings. So, the Movement has always been "in movement" and transnational since its creation.

The term "movement" is used in different areas such as the arts, sciences and philosophy to denote something new; a paradigm shift in a particular field; a desire to move to a new "place"; a change from one time to another. "Movement" can also be the same as "organisation" or a "collective", a group of people. I propose to look at the Hare Krishna movement as a "cultural and spiritual movement" due to its dialogue with popular culture, especially with music, which can be seen in its expressive practices in temples and city streets.

The Hare Krishna Movement activities in the temple and the public space of the city are attended by devotees and regular visitors of many nationalities mainly from countries such as Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, Nepal, India, and Portuguese citizens from the former African colonies, especially Angola and Mozambique. In this article, I discuss how the Hare Krishna Movement provides migrants and participants of Hare Krishna Movement activities, different ways of belonging to the city through collective musical practices. I intend to discuss how the city's dynamics influence these experiences and are influenced by it. I will also reflect on how the Hare Krishna Movement in Lisbon is increasingly bringing its "community" to the city's public space of *festivalization*, by treating religious practice as a public spectacle (Rasmussen 2010: 125).

### Collective musical practices among Hare Krishna devotees

Sankirtana is the most important devotional practice of the Hare Krishna Movement. The word has a double meaning, indicated by two distinct translations of its root. The Sanskrit verb "kirt", from which derives the word kirtana, means, on one hand, to "praise" or "glorify" and, on the other, to "Call". The prefix "san" means "all together" or "congregationally". Thus, the act of Kirtana is the praise or glorification of God and an invitation for people to participate in this glorification. Therefore, *sankirtana* expresses that, when *kirtana* is performed congregationally, the glorification and submission to God is perfect or complete (Indradyunna s/d).

The development of Krishna consciousness proposed by Caitanya Mahaprabhu and followed by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada focuses on the practice of *sankirtana*, which means "chanting the holy names". In the sixteenth century, *sankirtana* created a real "commu-



nity of Singing” in India, with strong membership in the country, something close to a mass movement (Adami 2013:194).

Hare Krishnas believe that mantra chanting does not only benefit those who perform it, but all those who are within its reach and can hear it (Brown 2014: 458). The musical practice is used to communicate Krishna consciousness so that individuals with different life experiences can find a meaning for life (Ibid.:470). It is, therefore, the collective devotional musical practice that facilitates one's spiritual experience. The focus on Hare Krishna devotional practice is not only listening to, but experiencing music (Fahy 2010: 5), which is done through the collective singing of mantras in a participatory mode.

The chanting of mantras plays a central role in the interaction and cohesion between individuals present in the temple and street activities, whether devotees or visitors. It is through the collective performance that individuals experience a feeling of oneness with others (Turino 2008:2-3). The signs of this “social intimacy” are experienced directly - body to body - and, therefore, in the moment they are felt as true. According to Turino, we depend on social groups - our family, our friends, our tribe, our nation - to survive emotionally, economically and belong to something greater than ourselves (ibid.).

*Sankirtana* is practised by all Hare Krishna devotees around the globe through two kinds of musical practices, *bhajan* and *kirtan*, which focus on the collective chanting of mantras in temples and in the streets. Both *bhajan* and *kirtan* are always performed in a call and response mode. The individual who is leading the musical practice indicates the tempo and the melody both to the public and to other musicians. In this sense, the musical practice among devotees is always participatory, with different levels of participation, from those responsible for playing and singing, to those who choose only to clap or repeat mantra lyrics.

The Hare Krishna Movement in Lisbon organises several events, some weekly, others sporadically. There are three activities that all Hare Krishna temples do: the Sunday Festival, Hari-nama and Food for Life, the first one in the temple and the other two on the city streets. In 2016, the annual festival Ratha Yatra Lisbon was also founded.

Among devotees of Krishna and regular visitors, the participation in musical practice suggests how these activities can help overcome barriers of social or cultural differences, allowing moments of integration between different groups (Brown 2014: 455). Music can also be used for self-identification and development of citizenship (Machin-Autenrieth 2013).

The voice should also be at the centre of debates on collective religious practices in the public space. Ethnomusicologist Monique Ingalls, in her research about Jesus in the City Parade, in Canada, suggests the use of voice is related to how participants use the performance to guide them in a broader context or a new society (2012: 339). The author states that when using music in their performances in the streets, participants are at the same time confronting and trying to be persuasive towards those outside their “community.” In this sense, it is possible to say that occupying the public space with the voice is a way of living in the city as a citizen and also a way of seeking to legitimise one's spiritual practice.

## Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal

Located in the centre of Lisbon, the Hare Krishna temple is a transnational space of migrant sociability. It is attended by devotees and visitors of many nationalities mainly from countries



such as Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, Nepal, India, and Portuguese citizens from the former African colonies, especially Angola and Mozambique. Some are former devotees; others become devotees in Portugal, and others are just regular visitors.

The inception of the Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal occurred between 1975 and 1977 through migrants from Brazil, Canada, U.S.A. and Angola. The date of the arrival of the first devotee in Portugal is not precise. The first Portuguese devotee of Krishna came from Angola in the mid-70s and became a devotee officially in France soon after. This Portuguese devotee from Angola would have been the only “initiated” by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of ISKCON, which, to the devotees, has a great importance in the history of the Movement in the country.

It was after the Carnation Revolution in 1974, that many religious practices emerged or ceased to exist clandestinely. During the Estado Novo (1933-1974), all non-Catholic religions were targeted by the most conservative sectors of the church (Vilaça 2003: 190). In 1976, a new constitution was approved by Parliament ensuring a democratic state. It is in this context that religious freedom becomes a reality. An article against religious discrimination (art.41.0-1), which specifies that “no one should be persecuted, deprived of rights or exempted from civil responsibilities or duties because of his religious beliefs” (ibid.2003:194), gives freedom to and equality among citizens. The conditions of freedom of action and expression provided by the democratic state opened doors to religious options previously unknown. Taking into account the social and political situation proves to be essential in understanding the current religious situation in Portugal (ibid. 195). These new policies and laws were created also as a reflection of the increasing arrival of immigrants with different backgrounds after the Carnation Revolution.

Portugal has a recent history of immigration, often characterised as “new migration” (Rodrigues 2010:91). Since 1974, with the fall of the colonial system and the collapse of the structure it sustained, Portugal started to show an unprecedented increase in its history of entries of immigrants and Portuguese returning from Africa (Dias 2016:163). The entry into the European Economic Union in 1986 also contributed to a significant improvement eventually attracting immigrants due to employment opportunities in the country, as well as to use Portugal as a getaway to the European Community (Malheiros 2007:17).

In this sense, say that not only the immigration cycles to Portugal are recent, but also its religious plurality. The dimension of the Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal is also a reflection of this past. Vilaça proposes that “the lack of religious plurality over the centuries, structured attitudes and collective social representations regarding a polarisation between, on the one hand, a strong identity and the adhering of Catholicism and on the other, an anti-clericalist sense”(2003: 195). This non-plural religious past, I believe, is reflects in the small membership of Portuguese in the Hare Krishna Movement.

Most Hindus residing in Portugal came from Mozambique in the early 80s, due to the worsening civil war in the country (Lourenço 2009: 4; Cachado 2009: 2). The Hindus in Portugal come from five distinct groups: Hindus; Muslims; Ismailis, Christians and most recently the Sikhs (Lourenço 2009: 4). Migratory paths of Hindu populations are closely associated with the history of European colonisation and its impacts on different continents (Dias 2016: 161).

In the mid-80s, the Hare Krishna movement had a strong participation from Indians coming mainly from Mozambique, many belonging to the current Hindu community, which



now congregates at the Radha Krishna temple in Lumiar, opened in 1995 (Dias 2016). In 1976, after the Carnation Revolution and the considerable increase of Hindu immigrants in the country, a committee for the organisation of cultural and recreational events of a religious nature was created for this community (Dias, 2016). It was precisely at this point that the relationship between the Hindu community and Hare Krishna devotees became very close. Giriraja Swami, the first guru to settle in Lisbon between 1980 and 1983 (remaining until 1990), came from the US. He had a good relationship with the "Hindu community". The Hare Krishna Movement conducted joint activities within the "Hindu Community of Portugal" at a location that was given to the Hindus by the Lisbon City Council in 1984, until the construction of the temple in Lumiar was completed. The location was a 1.600m<sup>2</sup> warehouse in Sapadores neighbourhood. Some of my collaborators mentioned they held festivals there with 300 to 400 participants, which is a relatively high number, even for the Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal today. When questioned about the participation of Hindus in the temple, the head of the temple says:

"Indians are wonderful people, highly pious and they come to take the darshan [reverence to the statues of the deities of the temple, which is considered a direct connection with God], see Krishna and give a donation, it is a natural thing. So Prabhupada's vision was perfect. He wanted a balance between the Indians and Westerners. Indians, when they wanted, they could contribute to the financial part, giving support to the devotees to propagate Krishna consciousness in any country whatsoever." (Paramgati Prabhu, head of the Temple of Lisbon in an interview in December 2013)

In the 90s, a group of devotees from Brazil arrived in Portugal. The group was composed of the current head of the temple in Lisbon and three devotees. Their arrival was the starting point for a wide circulation of Brazilians in Portugal and Portuguese devotees in Brazil. Regarding the intense presence of Brazilian devotees in Portugal, Paulo, a Portuguese-Brazilian devotee, makes a mistake when dividing the public between Brazilians and foreigners as if the Brazilians were not foreigners:

"We can divide the public between brazi... Portuguese and foreigners. We always have foreigners and Brazilians... they always came to the temple, people of other nationalities." (Interview with Paulo in March 2013)

The development of the practice in Portugal has had an intense involvement of Brazilian devotees throughout its history. Many arrive at the invitation of the head of the temple and spend seasons of six months in Lisbon/at the temple, leaving for Brazil when their tourist visa expires in order to be able to acquire a new visa and return to Portugal. Others, due to dual-citizenship, often Portuguese, can remain indefinitely. There are also cases where marriage with a national or European citizen also allows devotees to stay in the country, without necessarily being the sole cause of a civil union. I observed between the years 2011 and 2016 a considerable increase in Brazilian devotees coming and staying in the temple in Lisbon with administrative functions. It is possible to say that among devotees nowadays, Brazilians are the most numerous.

It should be emphasised that the common language, Portuguese, helps a Brazilian devotee to adapt in Portugal. The dialogue between both countries can also be exemplified by books and CDs in Portuguese mainly produced in Brazil. These reading and audio materials are



essential to the propagation of the movement in Portugal, as well as for bringing knowledge to devotees in Portugal.

The participation of Nepalese in the Hare Krishna Movement activities in the past ten years also has a connection to immigration flows from the country to Portugal. Migration of Nepalese, with a majority of Hindus, took place in two main phases. The first phase corresponds to the end of the Civil War that took place over ten years, ending in 2006, generating an economic crisis and increased unemployment among young people. The second phase was very recent, after the 2015 earthquake. According to Alexandra Pereira (2016), in 2013 SEF registered 2,050 Nepalese in Portugal 64% of who were between 20 and 35 years old. Nepal's immigration flow had such a significant increase in 2003 that the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), which supports Nepalese migrants in 73 countries was created to give support to its nationals in Portugal.

Another fairly numerous presence of migrants in the Hare Krishna temple are those from is from former Soviet countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Estonia. In the 2000s, the new migration of people from Ukraine and Russia to Portugal is also reflected in the arrival of devotees from these countries. The migration of devotees from eastern Europe to Portugal is related to the desire for a change of lifestyle. Some devotees like Valter, from Ukraine, say that "being a devotee is more difficult" in his country. However, the number of devotees in these countries is much higher than in Portugal. Available statistics point to 45-50,000 devotees in Ukraine in 2011 and 25,000 devotees only in Moscow, Russia, in 2012.

The increase of Brazilian devotees, as well as the emerging number of Nepalese regular visitors, are a reflection of the arrival of immigrants from these countries. Therefore, it is a set of political and social conditions established after the Carnation Revolution, the meeting of newly returned Portuguese from Africa with Hare Krishna devotees from Brazil, USA and Canada; a Hindu material culture that circulated among India, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa; and the need for a religious space for immigrant communities from Southeast Asia, which led to the establishment of the religious practice of the Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal over the past two decades.

### **Lisbon, a cosmopolitan city?**

The cosmopolitan character of a city comes from routes through which people, ideas, innovations and artefacts of diverse and distant origins circulate. Thus, the cosmopolitan character is not associated with its size, but the volume of material and people's mobilities (Magnani 2009: 22). "Mix" is a word often used in the literature on cosmopolitanism to describe expressive practices associated with cosmopolitanism. Different cultures from different countries are mixed, from which emerges something that is from the world instead of being from a particular place. In his book on *Jazz in Accra*, the ethnomusicologist Steven Feld describes cosmopolitanism as the agency of desires for participation in broad spaces that can help develop imagination (creativity) and performance, which can provide a connection between people with different backgrounds, routes and transits (2012: 49).

Lisbon is characterised by a significant movement of people who migrate permanently or temporarily to the city. The city has a particular dynamic concerning its neighbourhoods, which always have an intense cultural calendar focused on festivities (Oliveira & Padilla 2012; Men-



des 2012). Anthropologist Graça Índias Cordeiro says Lisbon's festivities and the idea of the city interact mutually, therefore it is not possible to analyse them separately (2001: 128-129). Following the author's proposal, I believe the festive character of Lisbon certainly makes an impact on the variety of religious and spiritual practices in the city, as well as on how religious institutions end up developing cultural activities in the public space (Giumbelli 2014; Mafra 2011; Montero 2009).

According to Oliveira & Padilla, some aspects of local cultural policies developed by CML (Lisbon City Hall) have been focusing on promoting diversity and local conviviality, especially by supporting inter- or multicultural events. These promotions are used by the local government to promote the presence of cultural diversity in their territory (2012: 131). In 2002 "diversity" became an advantageous strategy for the city as an advantage and the "ethnic" starts to gain strength in local discourse (Ibid). Lisbon City Hall (CML) starts to focus on three views for the city: (1) "Lisbon city of neighbourhoods", where the ethnic gains value; (2) "Lisbon city of entrepreneurs", encouraging multicultural activities; and (3) "Lisbon city of culture", where the multicultural dimension emerges as attractive to the city. CML starts to officially emphasise the image of Lisbon as "cosmopolitan and multicultural" (Oliveira & Padilla 2012: 137).

That "diversity" is in vogue in cultural policies of European countries is, of course, because of the phenomenon of international migration which has become relevant in the daily life of these countries (ibid.). In Portugal, the entry of immigrants post-Carnation Revolution and the country's entry into the European Community in 1986 are striking factors for the cultural diversity present in the city. It is this cultural diversity that CML sought in recent years to use as symbolic capital to promote the image of Lisbon as a cosmopolitan city (Oliveira & Padilha 2012; Oliveira 2012). These facts are very representative of the Hare Krishna Movement since it portrays the practice's entry into the country and the beginning of a more intense flow of immigrant devotees. These facts also show how migration has presented as a potentially critical situation with the participation of migrants in the city, whose conditions may give rise to different forms of integration in the "host societies" (Oliveira 2012: 212). In this sense, the city as a space where social, cultural and religious representations of immigration are constructed is lived according to a varied symbolic universe.

Another interesting proposal is what Turino (2003) calls "cosmopolitan formations." The "cosmopolitan formations" are part of what the author calls three types of "trans-states cultural formations": (1) cosmopolitan formations; (2) Immigrant communities; (3) The "immigrant communities" focus on meeting individuals of the same origin and a bilateral relationship between the point of origin and arrival, creating practices, ideas and objects that are a combination of the two. "Diaspora" involves connecting different locations in synchronic and diachronic ways, emphasising the origin, but creating relationships and dialogues within the same "source" from another country, also absorbing already existent diaspora dialogues at the destination. The "cosmopolitan formations" focus on individuality, universalism and multiple meanings of origin where the "world" is the source and a pan-historicism. It can be a positive or negative view, since the individual might be from "the world" or from "nowhere". This kind of cross-cultural formation is more focused on the "local", which is a contemporary and universal reflection of an "impersonal world" (Turino 2003).

For Turino, cultural immigrant associations and religious institutions are common phenomena that provide practical, social and emotional support. Immigrant communities and



diasporic groups often emphasise cultural practices and styles of their country of origin as tools for activities that unite and maintain the group in the new location. Activities from the country of origin like musical practices, dance and the organisation/participation in festivals are particularly powerful belonging tools (2003: 59). Bauman (2006) suggests the public space is the essence of cosmopolitanism and openness to the other, which suggests the public space as a new intercultural imaginary. It is this intercultural imaginary that the Hare Krishna Movement sought to participate in.

### Hare Krishna devotees in the city streets of Lisbon

“The Society [for Krishna Consciousness] is famous for its festivals and Sunday Festivals, as well as for singing in the streets. (2003:194). Sankirtana, or the chant of the Hare Krishna mantra, on the streets of the city for the benefit of all citizens is one of the most important activities of ISKCON. Sankirtanas are often seen celebrating the holy name of Krishna with dance and melodious singing, accompanied by mridanga drums and pairs of karatalas (hand cymbals). Through Joyful singing of the names of God, devotees experience an immediate sense of ecstasy. The effect is to cleanse the dirt absorbed by the mind from the darkness of material existence (2003:194). Festivities are organised around holidays celebrating the pastimes of Sri Krishna during his appearance on earth 5,000 years ago. Games, puppet shows and regular singing invite people to participate in the transcendental glorification of the Personality of God (...)” (The Krishna Consciousness Handbook, ISKCON, 1970).

Among the activities that take place in the city streets, *Harinama* is the most recurrent. Also known as *Harinama Sankirtana*, the activity consists of the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra through the streets of the city on a weekly basis, to disseminate their spiritual practice. During *Harinama*, one group of devotees plays and sings while another distributes books on the spiritual practice in return for a donation. They also give flyers regarding their vegetarian restaurant and free Sunday Festival.

The *Harinama* route takes place in the centre of Lisbon, generally from Rua Augusta to Rossio, ending at Camões Square or following to Comércio Square. The entire route is close to large concentrations of people. During my fieldwork, I regularly went to *Harinamas* to observe the interaction and reaction of devotees to the people they meet in the street, and the opposite, to see how people react to Hare Krishnas. In *Harinama*, it is the devotees who go to meet the other, anyone who comes into their path. It is during *Harinama* that devotees reaffirm their devotion, facing the most varied reactions from people outside the “protected” temple environment. As Magnani points out, “the expression of a cult is subject to negotiations that are not always free from conflicts and in becoming part of the growing complexity of urban life, it can be seen as strange, as foreign, and like it should not fit into the network of reliable and secure alliances of the family model” (2009: 21).

A study on the Hare Krishna Movement in São Paulo characterises *Harinama* as a public exercise of religion added into the plural space of the city (Almeida 2015). Almeida points out that when performing *Sankirtana*, the devotees feel they are a part of the city creating a dia-



logue. For the devotees, the *Harinama* is a moment of staging, in which the “role” of devotee should be presented well. The intention is to present the devotee as a cheerful, light and happy person, even though it may be a “staging”. I believe the *Harinama* is a unique moment in which being a devotee is put to the test of the other's gaze, being an exercise in vindication of the city, which is also his.

### **Ratha Yatra Festival and the legitimization of the Hare Krishna Movement in the public space of Lisbon**

“This extraordinary festival, which originated in India, in a city called Jagannatha Puri, is celebrated all around the world. Every year thousands of people in hundreds of cities participate in this unique celebration. Ratha Yatra means Festival of Chariots and celebrates the return of Krishna to his home in Vrindavan after a long period of separation from their relatives and friends. An atmosphere of joy invades the streets all along the parade's path, where colours and sounds blend harmoniously with the constant singing of the maha-mantra Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. In the end, there will be a great meeting with various activities, music, dance and distribution of delicious vegetarian preparations.” (Description of Ratha Yatra published at [www.rathayatralisboa.pt](http://www.rathayatralisboa.pt))

In the year 2016, the devotees began to perform a festival called Ratha Yatra, which is usually held once a year. Ratha Yatra is also known as the Chariot Festival, initially celebrated in the city of Jagannatha Puri in India. The Hare Krishna Movement has organised this same festival for decades in several cities such as London, Paris and New York. It is the activity that gives the highest visibility to the Hare Krishna Movement nowadays. Unlike the Harinama, where the primary goal is to introduce the practice to the local citizens and raise funds for the temple, the Ratha Yatra has at its base the proposal to unite different groups, entities and migrant communities in a collective performance through the streets of the city center, thus creating a kind of citizenship parade.

Harinama is the mantra singing through the streets of the city for the spreading of spiritual practice, distribution of books, asking for donations and to invite visitors to the Sunday Festival and the restaurant, the temple's main source of income.

The musical practice is regarded as a means of communicating Krishna consciousness and enabling people of widely varied backgrounds to find meaning in life (Ibid.:470). This congregational devotion, centring on collective musical practice, therefore stimulates individuals' spiritual experience (Fahy 2010: 5).

In Lisbon, the festival serves as a grand parade through the streets of the city centre, starting from Largo do Intendente to Ribeira da Naus. Throughout the route taken by the Ratha Yatra, the Hare Krishna mantra is sung and, like a carnival block, its lyrics and melody is repeated by most who follow the parade, thus integrating Lisbon citizens and visitors in the spiritual practice. The Ratha Yatra should also be seen as a result of the attempts of Hare Krishna Movement to participate in the city's expressive practices that follow the “diversity” and “multiculturalism” proposed by Lisbon City Hall.



Ratha Yatra route map, 03/09/2016, <http://www.rathayatralisboa.pt/>

In 2016 and 2017, The Ratha Yatra was co-organized with Lisbon City Hall, “Festas de Lisboa” (EGEAC), Social Rights/Lisbon City Hall and Lusofona University/Science of Religions, with representatives of these institutions participating in the religious opening ceremony, which is presented in Portuguese and English. Several migrant communities also contributed to the Ratha Yatra financially, which gave them the freedom to parade with their flags, as was the case for the Hindu Community in Portugal. The festival had professional coverage in photos, video, and even air recordings made by a drone. TV Arroios, a local channel that covers the area of the city where Ratha Yatra started the parade, also did a special report on the event.

Ratha Yatra cannot happen without the support of the hindu communities since the Hare Krishna Movement doesn't have a sufficient number of devotees to make a large scale parade. The festival was the first attempt of the Movement to create a dialogue with Lisbon City Hall, and it focused on showing the Ratha Yatra and the Hare Krishna Movement as a hindu tradition with good dialogue with other hindu communities such as the Hindu Community of Portugal, Shiva Temple, Gurdwara Sikk Sangat Sahib (Sikkh temple), BAPS Sri Swamirayan Mandir, Bangladesh Community in Portugal and Durga temple, all collaborators of the festival. Although most hindu communities are not interested in an in-depth dialogue with the Hare Krishnas, the Ratha Yatra create a possibility for hindu representation and occupation of the public city public space.

As mentioned in the beginning if this article, although the Hare Krishna Movement (ISKCON) is an offshoot of Hinduism, it was not developed in India. The Hare Krishna



Ratha Yatra Lisbon, photo by the author, 2017

Movement went to India after it was already developed in the United States of America and Europe. There are controversies regarding how well accepted the Movement is in India. Mostly, it is still seen as a “western Hindu practice”. In Lisbon, there is a coexistence agreement between devotees of Krishna and Hindu families who are not Krishna devotees in Lisbon. Hare Krishna devotees often financially depend on donations, such as the ones done by families from Southeast Asian countries, who fund festivals and dinners. The presence at the temple of Southeast Asians who are not devotees of Krishna is a coexistence agreement. It gives the Southeast Asian migrants the possibility to use a sacred space, to have access to the deities, and the temple receives the financial aid and donations needed for its operation. The relationships between ISKCON devotees and Southeast Asian devotees have become more collaborative since the Hare Krishna Movement has been helping the Hindu communities to gain visibility in the city with the Ratha Yatra Festival.

The Ratha Yatra Festival, presented as an example of good dialogue between Hindu communities (even the ones considered “too western” for Hindus), has raised the Lisbon City Hall’s attention. For the 2017 edition, Lisbon City Hall signed a protocol of support and co-organization. This protocol was signed at an official ceremony at the Hare Krishna Cultural Centre with the participation of members of Hindu communities. During the event, the Lisbon City Council distributed a magazine they printed entitled “Ratha Yatra is a universal festival made



Harinama at Chiado, Lisbon, photo by the author, 2013

by everyone and for all.” The Lisbon City Hall also distributed another magazine called “Diversity: interculturality is inclusion”.

ISKCON Portugal was also called by the Lisbon City Hall to organize the European Hindu Forum in June, two weeks before the festival. The Hindu-European Forum, as advertised:

“promotes values of friendship, peace and inter-religious values, aims to provide government support for citizens, build communities that are integrated and improve the integration of Hindu communities. To promote European human values of dignity using Hindu ethics which is rooted in respect for all traditions, cultures, religions and beliefs.”

Both the signing of the protocol and the organization of the Hindu-European Forum point to the fact that the Ratha Yatra festival has opened a dialogue between the Hare Krishna Movement, the Lisbon City Hall and the Hindu communities. As a result, the festival functions socially and politically for all, legitimising the participants in the public space of the city, including those who do not identify themselves in terms of religious practices.

## Conclusions

The Hare Krishna Movement has sought to integrate itself into every day and festive practices of sociability in the city of Lisbon, organising activities that, despite being of a religious nature, are presented as cultural events. Musical performance, dance, and other expressive practices are



ways in which individuals articulate collective identities that are shown as fundamental to the formation and sustenance of social groups, indispensable for survival (Turino 2008: 2). Prayer in general, which among Hare Krishna devotees takes place through the chanting of mantras, is important for the religious imaginary, occupying a central role (Mapril 2009: 135). It is in the musical practice, constituted by the collective chanting of mantras, that devotees and visitors meet the same goal and speak “the same language.” Since the Hare Krishna Movement is a transnational spiritual practice in which language is sometimes a barrier, the collective chanting of mantras is the moment when the sense of unity and integration seems possible.

The activities of the Hare Krishna Movement are aligned with the change in the dynamics of the city and with a cultural policy that aims to promote the image of Lisbon as a multicultural and cosmopolitan city, which has been adapting its range of services, activities and events, including the ones with a religious aspect. The Hare Krishna Movement is increasingly occupying the city's festive space by treating spiritual practice as a public spectacle (Rasmussen 2010: 125). Devotees and participants of the Hare Krishna activities, mostly immigrants, appropriate the public space to express themselves in the city where they live. Also, the events organised by them in the city meet the ideas of “diversity” and “multiculturalism” promoted by the Lisbon City Hall.

The Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal, particularly in Lisbon, extends itself to an international network, mostly composed by other Hindu communities, because of its needs to expand its borders due to the small number of devotees present in the country. The Hare Krishna spiritual practice is not intended for a particular immigrant group. The collected fieldwork data shows that the immigration cycles for Portugal coincide and reflects the varied origins of devotees and regular visitors (Baldelli 2017). The fact the Hare Krishna Movement in Portugal is mainly composed by immigrants also highlights how people might look for a spiritual/religious practice when trying to adapt to a new country.

Religious belongings are an identity resource that facilitates the processes of social mobility (Ramalho 2010: 48). Religion also helps create living spaces, ranging from a particular architecture that transports somewhere, to the production of sacred artefacts that generate a religious habit even in the practitioner's body (Vasques 2006). In this context, the existence of spaces for worship in which religious or spiritual practices can be acted, realising what Mapril calls the creation of a “geography of the virtues”, where new places of prayer are created according to immigrants' needs, usually close to where they live or work, demonstrate an adaptation of immigrants' religious practices to their daily lives in the city (2009: 148).

The cosmopolitan character of Lisbon, along with the process of *touristification* of the city, have changed the cultural activities of the city, which have also influenced the way spiritual/religious practices work and function in the public space. This cosmopolitan characteristic allows religious/spiritual communities like the Hare Krishna to broaden their dialogue with cultural associations of immigrants, such as those related to Southeast Asian countries, which seek greater visibility for their communities in the city. The cultural policy of the Lisbon City Hall aims to respond to the new needs of its citizens and visitors, making the public space a stage for celebrations of all kinds, including religious celebrations and festivals. These are presented as cultural activities of the city, and expressive practices such as those performed by Hare Krishna devotees begin to participate in the process of *festivalization* of religion. In this process, the centrality of musical practice in Hare Krishna devotion facilitates its inception



through an attempt to transform the vision and projection of the spiritual practice as a cultural practice of Hindu tradition in a context that promotes cultural diversity. This aspect resembles the moment of the inception of the Hare Krishna Movement through a dialogue with the counterculture movement in the United States of America in the 60s, in which music and collective musical practices played fundamental roles (Baldelli 2017a).

Several expressive activities and devotional practices developed by the Hare Krishna Movement can be seen as proposals to experience Lisbon, meet to the city's changes and meeting the cultural policy of the local authority. The Hare Krishna festivals seem to function as immigrant integration activities, being examples of the adaptability of a spiritual practice to the city and its citizens. The Hare Krishna Movement has increasingly brought the "community" into the city's festive space, treating spiritual practice as a public spectacle. The expressive practices presented, especially the Ratha Yatra, demonstrate the interest in the diversification of the activities carried out by the Hare Krishna Movement and the Cultural policy of Lisbon City Hall, anchored in a cosmopolitan and multicultural perspective for the city. In this regard, this article hopes to contribute to future research focusing on how religious practices are moving into the sphere of culture, increasingly integrating in cities' dynamics (Giumbelli 2014, 2008, Mafru 2011, 2009).

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#### Videos

##### *Harinama*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=43&v=ITdq08-3\\_F8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=ITdq08-3_F8)

##### *Ratha Yatra 2016*

<https://vimeo.com/179392663>

##### *Ratha Yatra 2017*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFYzIXcJ7d8&t=92s>

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# DISPLACED

## Künstlerisches Forschen, Lehren und Lernen in Transformationsprozessen

Karin Harather

- Abstract** DISPLACED ist ein universitäres Lehr- und Forschungsprojekt an der Schnittstelle von Kunst, Architektur, Bildung, Migration und Integration, das ich im Rahmen meiner Tätigkeit am Institut für Kunst und Gestaltung 1 an der Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung, TU Wien gemeinsam mit Renate Stuefer im Frühjahr 2015 initiiert habe und seither in kooperativen Prozessen kontinuierlich weiterentwickle. DISPLACED steht für neue, kooperative und transdisziplinäre Formen der Wissensgenerierung, die einerseits künstlerische und architektonisch-räumliche Expertise mit sozialen und bildungsspezifischen Arbeitsfeldern verbinden und andererseits das formale Bildungssystem „Universität“ mit den non-formalen und informellen Lernwelten von Asylsuchenden kombinieren. Studierende arbeiten im Rahmen von Master-Lehrveranstaltungen in Coworking- und Buddy-System-Projekten mit Geflüchteten: in offenen Prozessen und mittels künstlerischer Strategien wird mit- und voneinander gelernt, werden praxistaugliche 1:1-Modelle für bedarfsorientierte Aneignungs- und Bildungsräume erprobt, werden reale Orte für das interkulturelle Zusammenkommen geschaffen, wird Integration über regelmäßige soziale Kontakte, und das verbale wie auch nonverbale Ausverhandeln im gemeinsamen Tun, gelebt. In den vergangenen drei Jahren konnte das prozesshafte Living-Lab-Geschehen im ehemals größten Wiener Flüchtlingsquartier, Haus Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7 in Wien Mitte, und an anderen Standorten in Wien verortet werden, um sozialräumliche Möglichkeiten und Wirkungsweisen des kreativen Schaffens in Transformationsprozessen auszuloten. Mit dem mobilen Studio.DISPLACED, einem umgebauten Linienbus, steht seit März 2017 nun eine eigene „Homebase“ und Vernetzungsplattform zur Verfügung, um die sozialintegrative Aktivierung von OPENmarx, einem Zwischennutzungsareal unserer Fakultät im Stadtentwicklungsgebiet Neu Marx, experimentell und kollaborativ voranzutreiben – und um im Bedarfsfall auch räumlich mobil zu sein.
- Keywords** Künstlerische Forschung; sozialintegrative Bildungsräume; Migration, Flucht und Asyl; Kunst, Architektur und Bildung; Improvisiertes Gestalten
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.6



Das experimentelle, kooperative Lehrveranstaltungsvorhaben „DISPLACED. Refugees and the City“ wurde als offene Projektwoche für „urbanize! – Internationales Festival für urbane Erkundungen“ konzipiert. Dem Festival stand als Zwischennutzung ein riesiges, vollkommen leeres Gründerzeitgebäude in Wien Mitte zur Verfügung. Im September 2015, kurz vor Festivalbeginn, wurde das Haus ganz spontan in ein Flüchtlings transitquartier umfunktioniert: Gemeinsam mit Menschen auf der Flucht, der Rot-Kreuz-Hausleitung, vielen Freiwilligen und anderen Universitätsinitiativen entwickelte das DISPLACED-Team innovative sozialräumliche Akutmaßnahmen.<sup>1</sup>



Wie sich in unserer Arbeit mit Menschen, die sich noch im Asylverfahren befinden, immer wieder zeigt, kann künstlerisches Denken und Handeln jene gestalterischen Frei-Räume eröffnen, die in der Passivität des „Grundversorgtwerdens“ und Wartens einen entscheidenden Mehrwert darstellen: Daher ist es wichtig, bereits die „Räume des Ankommens“ in Massenunterkünften und Grundversorgungsquartieren als atmosphärische Lebens- und Bildungsräume zu gestalten, in denen Neuankommende nicht abgeschottet werden, sondern die für vielfältige soziale Kontakte, interkulturellen Austausch und das Sinn stiftende, gemeinsame Sein und Tun offen stehen.<sup>2</sup>



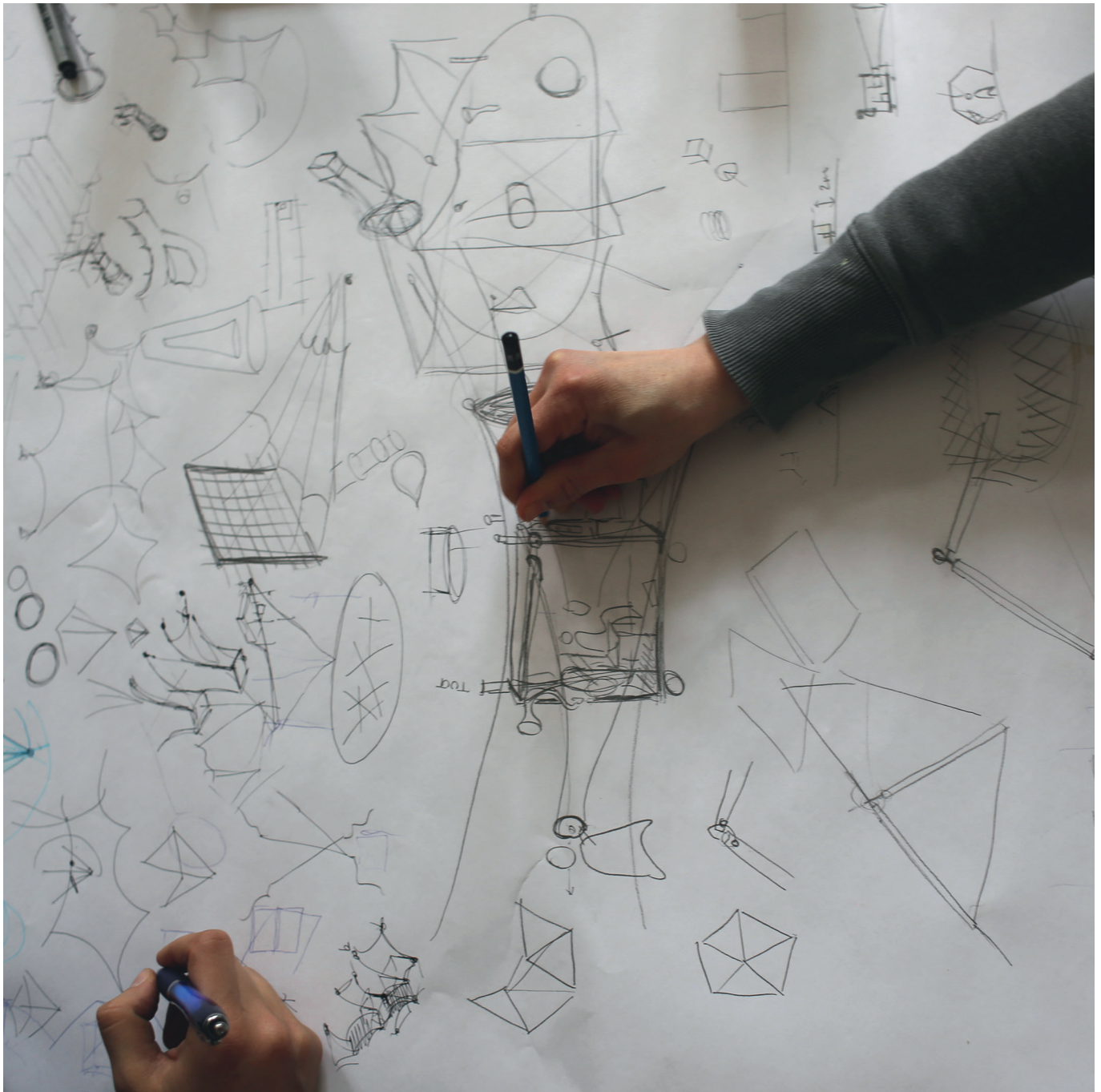
Nachdem die Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7 ab Mitte Oktober 2015 sukzessive vom Transitquartier (für bis zu 1500 Menschen) in eine Unterkunft für längerfristiges Wohnen übergeführt wurde, war die Einrichtung einer DISPLACED-Zentrale – mit Lagerräumen, Werkstatträumen und einem zentralen Besprechungsraum, der als Treffpunkt, Austausch- und Vernetzungsort für all jene diente, die sich in dieses Real-Live-Projekt aktiv einbringen wollten, ein erster Meilenstein. Weitere waren die Eröffnung des Kulturcafés Mitte November und der Sanitäreinrichtungen Anfang Dezember (denn im ehemaligen Verwaltungsgebäude fehlte die entsprechende Infrastruktur).<sup>3</sup>



Zunächst war die Situation im Haus prekär: Das seit einigen Jahren leerstehende Gebäude aus der Gründerzeit war nicht für Wohnzwecke vorgesehen. Hunderte von völlig kahlen Büroräumen wurden nur mit Feldbetten oder ISO-Matten „möbliert“, und rigide Brandschutzbestimmungen untersagten jegliche Raumausstattung mit textilen Materialien.<sup>4</sup> Mit dem bunten „Häkelei“-Blumenmuster der eigens entwickelten Stecksystemtische (Design: Simon Übleis-Lang, Plattendekor: Harather/Lechner, Material- und Produktionssponsoring: Fa. FUNDERmax) konnten zweckmäßige und dennoch räumlich-atmosphärische Akzente in den Gemeinschaftsbereichen gesetzt werden.



In einer Situation, in der mannigfaltige Mangelzustände und Ungewissheiten den Alltag prägen, entstanden räumliche und soziale Konstellationen von ungeahnter Qualität. Viele Lernerfahrungen, die im universitären „Normalbetrieb“ nicht zustande kämen, wurden abseits bürokratischer Strukturen möglich:<sup>5</sup> Mit minimalen materiellen Ressourcen, jedoch mit fachlichem Knowhow, individueller Kooperationsbereitschaft und persönlichem Engagement entstand beispielsweise aus einem chaotischen Kleiderlager eine Bibliothek mit Lernraum und ein neues Kleiderlager wurde als shop-artige Location in den großzügigen Kellerräumen eingerichtet.



Die so konkrete und unmittelbar angewandte Auseinandersetzung mit Fragen, was Raum im Kontext von Flucht und Asyl für die Einzelperson und was für die Gemeinschaft bedeutet, was räumliche Konstellationen verhindern oder andererseits auch ermöglichen können, war mit eindrucksvollen und teils sehr fordernden Lernerfahrungen verbunden: Das Ideen-Sammeln, Zeichnen und Planen im Team war für viele ebenso ungewohnt wie das Improvisieren und Ad-hoc-Gestalten nur mit dem, was rasch und günstig organisiert werden konnte. Das selbst Gestaltete und Gebaute schließlich realisiert zu sehen, war für alle Projektbeteiligten sehr bereichernd.<sup>6</sup>



Mit jungen Geflüchteten machten wir uns auf die Suche nach urbanen Entwicklungspotenzialen für aktivierende, atmosphärische Bildungslandschaften abseits konsumorientierter Zwänge. Das gemeinsame Musizieren als gruppendynamischer Prozess und Möglichkeit der nonverbalen Kommunikation, in der sich unterschiedliche Individualitäten spielerisch zu immer neuen Orchestrierungen zusammenfinden können, wurde zum Ausgangspunkt dieser konkreten Raumproduktion: Entstanden ist ein Minimalraum auf Rädern, der sich erstaunlich „entfalten“ kann und einlädt, sich mit selbst gebauten Instrumenten kreativ einzubringen und Teil des Geschehens zu sein.<sup>7</sup>



Häufig sind es die „kreativen Störfälle“, die das eindeutig Zweckgerichtete, das alltäglich Praktikable, das scheinbar Selbstverständliche oder auch das zufällig Vorhandene neu und unerwartet in den Blickpunkt rücken. Daher ist es mir wichtig, mit meinem Verständnis von „Zweckästhetik“ ästhetische Bildungsprozesse zu mobilisieren, die nicht nur auf dem sicheren Terrain des „Schönen“ verharren. Abstecher in unbekannte Weiten des „Kunstlosen“, Grenzgänge zwischen diversen Bereichen des Alltäglichen, Gratwanderungen am Rande des „Banalen“ können zwar riskant, aber auch wunderbar anregend sein und sogar völlig neue Welten erschließen.<sup>8</sup>



Am Zwischennutzungsareal OPENmarx entsteht seit Herbst 2015 eine „Open University“ der Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung, TU Wien. Über die Aktivitäten und Netzwerke von future.lab, design.build und DISPLACED konnten von Beginn an unterschiedlichste AkteurInnen in diesen Ausbau- und Standortentwicklungsprozess miteinbezogen werden. Mit neuen Kooperationsmodellen, die einen wechselseitigen Knowhow-Transfer zwischen Universitäten, Asylsuchenden, die in der nahegelegenen Flüchtlingsunterkunft „Haus Erdberg“ wohnen, Initiativen und NGOs in Gang setzen, werden sozialintegrative informelle Bildungsräume erprobt und verstetigt.<sup>9</sup>



Über diverse DISPLACED-Lehrveranstaltungen (im Masterstudium Architektur als „Künstlerisches Projekt“ und „Stegreifentwerfen“ curricular verankert), wurde ein Buddy-System aufgebaut, in dem Studierende und Asylsuchende (aus dem nahen „Haus Erdberg“, teils aus anderen Wiener Quartieren und sogar aus NÖ) ein fixes Projektteam bilden: Im kontinuierlichen persönlichen Kontakt wird wechselseitiger Wissensaustausch auf freundschaftlicher Basis und Augenhöhe möglich, unterschiedliches Vorwissen und individuelle Skills fließen in den Coworking-Prozess ein, um sozialintegrative 1:1-Bildungssettings am OPENmarx-Gelände zu realisieren.<sup>10</sup>



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*x.1 (oben links), x.2 (oben rechts), x.3 (mitte links), x.4 (mitte rechts), x.5 (unten links), x.6 (unten rechts)*

S. 78: Matthias Cremer/ Der Standard (2.1), Projektteam DISPLACED (78.1., 78.2., 78.3, 78.4., 78.5., 78.6)

S. 79: Renate Stuefer

S. 80: Renate Stuefer (80.1), Holly Kellner/ Wiener Rotes Kreuz (80.2), Bernhard Rothkappel (80.3), Projektteam DISPLACED (80.4.), Renate Stuefer (80.5), David Hanke (80.6)

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S. 87: Karin Harather

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# The Art of Migration: Contemporary Visual Artists beyond the Boundaries of Turkey

Lora Sariaslan

**Abstract** This article explores mobility and migration from Turkey to Europe and its role in the making of trans- and international (artistic) identities. It specifically investigates the articulation and dynamics of hyphenated European-Turkish identities, and new forms of European and diasporic citizenship through the work and biographies of contemporary visual artists originally from Turkey who have left their 'home' for various reasons (migration, education, or artist residencies). What makes these artists particularly pertinent for an investigation of new forms of identity, citizenship-making, and belonging in contemporary Europe is that their art cannot exist without either Europe or Turkey. By concentrating on their art, this paper focuses on a new way of thinking about the immigration experience and the politics of belonging through an investigation of how these artistic trajectories are mapped in a transnational context through a number of different cities including Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Istanbul.

**Keywords** Contemporary art, Immigration, Mobility, Transcultural art

**DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.7



## Introduction

“Migration is a historical as well as a trans-historical concept: transhistorical in the sense that people and cultural forms have always migrated; historical in the sense that the character of migration has changed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the term migration refers to population movements either within nation states or across their borders, modern migration movements are more complex and diverse.”<sup>1</sup> The art world boasts of many ‘immigrant’ artists, now traveling and working between the West and the non-West, North, and South. They are now attaining a completely new status as world travelers, carrying out a veritable exchange between cultures and peoples.<sup>2</sup> I would like to suggest a new way of thinking about the immigration experience: not as a fixed and static point or a landing, but rather as a dynamic trajectory. Commencing in a ‘someplace’ of origin (in this case, Turkey) and eventually leading to a city in another country, via the ‘arrival city’ with its economic, educational, political, and cultural life, this dotted line is a tangible reality in the minds and lives of most immigrants.

Transitoriness is frequently defined as a state antithetical to belonging: between stable states and homes. One of the aspects of globalization has been the identification of a new social group expanding constantly. In a country such as Turkey, the fluidity of borders – geographic, psychological, and symbolic – is graven into the national consciousness. As the focused selection of artists in this article attests, the common thread that binds contemporary artists originally from Turkey (active in Turkey or elsewhere) is a state of being that encompasses many voices and multiple places, and an understanding that home is a zone that we actively create which can be later remade, and remade again.

This article explores mobility and migration from Turkey to Europe and its role in the making of trans-and international identities. It specifically investigates the articulation and dynamics of hyphenated European-Turkish identities, and new forms of European and diasporic citizenship through the work and biographies of contemporary visual artists originally from Turkey who have left their ‘home’ for various reasons (migration, education, or artist residencies). What makes these artists particularly pertinent for an investigation of new forms of identity, citizenship-making, and belonging in contemporary Europe is that their art cannot exist without either Europe or Turkey. Concentrating on their art as ‘snap shots,’ this paper focuses on the politics of belonging through an investigation of how these artistic trajectories are mapped in a transnational context through different cities such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Istanbul.

The exploration of aesthetic dimensions of cultural products and works of art created by artists who engage themes such as migration, transculturation and cultural translation will be the focus of this article. This is what makes concentrating on a number of artists originally from Turkey that has emerged since the 1990s a rewarding exercise, for the reason that the artists have no choice but to engage – which may also mean through disengagement – with Turkey and its numerous stereotypes and assumptions. The artists in focus are models of cultural pluralism: having trained in Europe, while maintaining an art practice indelibly tinged with

1 Sten Pultz Moslund, Anne Ring Petersen, and Moritz Schramm, ‘Introduction’, in *Migration and Culture. Politics, Aesthetics and History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2015), 1.

2 Hanru, Hou and Gabi Scardi (editors), *Wherever We Go – Art, Identity, Cultures in Transit* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2008), 15.

Turkish experience, whatever that may be in their or our eyes and therefore become examples of the global worldview that is a hallmark of contemporary art. As Mieke Bal and Miguel A. Hernandez-Navarro write, “migration becomes a double movement, a double metaphor: of transport, hence of instability – the first movement; and subsequent productive tensions – the second movement. Every culture has the aesthetics it deserves; contemporary culture, we contend, has therefore a ‘migratory aesthetics’.”<sup>3</sup>

As Frederick N. Bohrer notes, “[Stuart] Hall makes the case for understanding concepts like belonging and homes in the context of migration, statelessness, diaspora and similar features of a globalized world. Counterintuitive as it may seem, this conception is already with us, rooted in the trajectories of transnational life.”<sup>4</sup> As we come to see identity in the interplay of various dynamic forces, it follows that identity itself is not fixed, but fluid – not given but performed. In this context, Hall writes: “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”<sup>5</sup> In his terms, we see an identity constituted *within* representation. That is, it is a sense of oneself and others that emerge in the making, not one designed to correspond to some prior, exterior condition. It comes about not through reiterating but rather questioning and recontextualizing inherited cultural practices.

As Katherine Pratt Ewing argues, “the concept of hybridity is not a good model for analyzing how people caught between cultures actually negotiate identity, because it does not explain how individuals manage inconsistency through a variety of cultural and psychological strategies that generate multiple, contextualized identities.”<sup>6</sup> She later states, “that an ideology based on multiculturalism and celebratory hybridity imagines homogeneous collective identities that hamper recognition of the actual heterogeneity”.<sup>7</sup>

For Turkey, these oscillations are particularly pronounced, no less because its modernization had always sought the integration with the West. For those Turkish artists who are on the global art stage, a common thread is the many slippages that occur from (non)belonging, or in other words in forms of identification that are “yes...but”.<sup>8</sup> The artists and works below have been chosen for the extent to which they exemplify the contemporary and always evolving notion of the ‘fluid space’. This is the space where cultural legacy and inheritance is not abjured, but rather exposed for its heterogeneity, and its constructive capacity to shape and re-imagine itself as they destabilize clichés. In order to give an example from possible routes of mobility or

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3 Mieke Bal and Miguel A. Hernandez-Navarro, *Art and Visibility in Migratory Cultures*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 11.

4 Frederick N. Bohrer, ‘Borders (and Boarders) of Art: Notes from a Foreign Land’, in *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, edited by Ed. Kamal Boullata (London: Saqi Books, 2008), 29.

5 Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural identity and diaspora,’ in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by P. Williams and L. Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 392.

6 K. P. Ewing, ‘Between Cinema and Social Work: Diasporic Turkish Women and the (Dis)Pleasures of Hybridity’, *Cultural Anthropology*, 21 2006: 265-294.  
doi:10.1525/can.2006.21.2.265, here 266.

7 Ibid., 285.

8 See Lora Sariaslan, ‘They are all Turks, but very very nice’: Re-placing contemporary artists of Turkish origin’, *European Journal of Futures Research* 2016 4, 3.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40309-016-0084-2>



the different trajectories of immigration, this article will focus on artists who come from the *Gastarbeiter* background (Nasan Tur) or move to Europe due to parents who wanted to migrate for a better life (Anny and Sibel Öztürk), and lastly, migrating as an adult primarily for education and a better life (Servet Koçyiğit).

## Nasan Tur

Born in Offenbach in 1974, Nasan Tur currently lives and works in Berlin. The son of *Gastarbeiters*, he positions himself firmly in the Berlin art world and possesses a varied practice that ranges from sculpture, drawing, video and photography to performance and installation. Keeping observation, analysis, and reproduction at the heart of his oeuvre, Tur works with political ideologies, subliminal messages, as well as symbols of power and dissent.

“The attempts to overcome visible and invisible borders, at least symbolically or metaphorically, through cultural practices must therefore ultimately include a serious rethinking of how art can be meaningfully and productively linked to political activism in the context of migration.”<sup>9</sup> As Nasan Tur says, “I see myself as a political person, so I am therefore also a political artist. However, I believe my task as an artist is not to pursue politics, but rather to seriously and critically address political themes that considerably influence our lives in society. This also means producing uncomfortable and challenging works.”<sup>10</sup> Tur turns into a prime practitioner of what Mieke Bal and Miguel A. Hernandez-Navarro write as “art can enact small-scale resistances against the status quo”. And moreover, “art *works* as art because it works politically.”<sup>11</sup> So, too, does Nasan Tur.

The variability of people’s perceptions and reactions depending on their cultural background make up the most important part of the social context that Tur observes and describes. Elemental, human, and yet at times difficult to analyse, humor can be political and is an entry point into diverse cultures as well as a strategy to survive within it. Tur enables a case to focus on how humor works as a captivating mode of expression, a cultural product, and topic for discussion, despite its levity. Humor is a constant in human lives, ever present, although ever-changing, and inextricably tangled up with art. Examining humorous art in its full complexity, however, can reveal not only witty and strategic manipulations but also layered meanings and aesthetic sophistication. Humor surprises and grabs our attention, and that is precisely why artists employ it... and what better place to start from but the self. Needless to say, self-portraiture has a long tradition. As the first ‘snapshot’ of the artist, I would like to focus on a rather contemporary example of a self-portrait by Nasan Tur where he practices multiple identities. Prior to applying for his German identity card, Tur grew a moustache in order to look like a ‘typical’ Turk and then had his photo taken in this manner. The result is that his ID card shows the photograph of a young man with moustache, apparently fitting to the Turkish name documented on it, however, for the artist, the photograph was a personal performance and experience.

“When I applied for a German documentation, I grew a moustache for a few months that

9 Moslund et al., 8.

10 Eugen El, ‘I am a political artist’ interview with Nasan Tur <[http://www.schirn.de/en/magazine/interviews/2018\\_interview/interview\\_with\\_nasan\\_tur/](http://www.schirn.de/en/magazine/interviews/2018_interview/interview_with_nasan_tur/)> (last accessed June 25, 2018).

11 Bal et al., 9.

would better reflect the stereotype of the Turk in Germany. This alteration on my face had a great impact on my daily life. People's reaction to my appearance changed completely. In the circles where I usually hang out, I suddenly became unpopular, I was negatively judged and considered not sexy by women while, by contrast, I was greeted with a friendly 'Selaam aleykum' when I passed by Turkish and Arab cafes and gained enthusiastic compliments from my uncles and aunties. I had my photograph taken with this Turkish moustache and I passed it onto the authorities for the issuing of the passport. Now I am the owner of a German passport with a photo that conforms to the cliché of the typical Turk, but in reality, has nothing to do with me."<sup>12</sup>

In his *Self-Portrait* (2000) (Fig. 1), Nasan Tur embodies the reinforced national stereotype

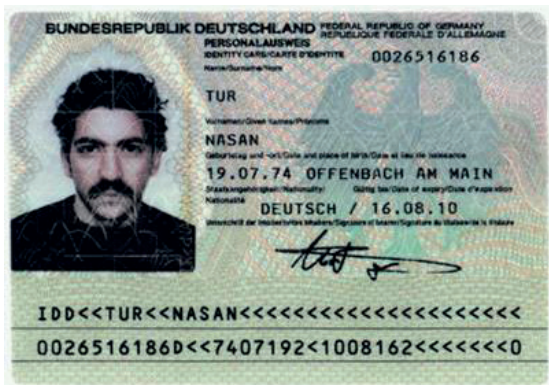


Fig. 1: Nasan Tur, *Self-portrait*, 2000. Original German passport, 7x10 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

of a dark-skinned Turk with a moustache on a German identity card, a 'place' where everything is in German, and where the Turk is absent. The moustache, as the cultural Turkish 'suffix,' is not translated into German. The work is not a representation of Tur, but a parodic mime of stereotypes of 'authentic' Turkishness that reflect only our projections of identity; and indeed, it undermines *any* claims to fixed or authentic identity. Although enjoying growing the exaggerated 'Turkish moustache,' Tur was also aware of a clear change and increasing process of exclusion from his own circles. In addition, the fun was not extended to the border controls

where he was not only seen as foreign but also threatening and therefore inspected.

A passport or an identity card lies on the border of private and public, individual and ordinary. It is a tool of altered heterogenic significance when abroad, and simultaneously a definer of identity through national affiliation. In a humorous way, Tur demonstrates that identity depends mostly on diverse forms, namely contact with others and their reading or reception of the signs. Comparing 'presumed' or 'pre-conceived' Turkish and German stereotypes, he examines the subject of identity and its social implications. The work is humorous and ironic, yet, investigative and critical at the same time.

Achille Bonito Oliva, the artistic director of the 1993 Venice Biennial and one of the earliest art critics and curators in Europe to discuss the effect of globalization on art writes:

"A work of art comes to function much like a mixer, blending together diverse languages while causing traditional aesthetic categories to dematerialize. It acts on the viewing public with the alienating force of reality in motion, by the ability to affirm its own lack of consensus. Its consistent nature of diaspora springs from a tradition going from the historical avant-garde to trans-avant-garde, and it witnesses that art is autonomous and that it cannot operate according to the principles of identification. Contemporary art successfully exploits the overcoming of traditional barriers, to gain access to the rapidity of itineraries that play on the principle of

12 Karin Pernegger, 'Nasan Tur', *Failed* 2014, 46.



contamination. This principle counters the risk of standardization, which is the consequence of telecommunication and globalization. On the one hand, such a principle makes the most of trespassing and cultural interaction; on the other hand, it affirms that the individual artist has the right to produce unexpected and amazing forms, stemming from a symbolic scheme that is free from hierarchy.”<sup>13</sup>

Nasan Tur knows that humor can be a catalyst. His interest in socio-cultural critique is present even more humorously in *Somersaulting man* (2001-7) (Fig. 2). Conceived as a form of continuous cultural study, this work documents the artist somersaulting through different cities around the world. The enjoyable absurdity of the childlike, playful somersaults in front of the steady camera and set against the cacophonous metropolis, can flip easily into a questionable action at the thought of the physical strain and feeling of the rough tarmac on the artist’s back and shoulders. The video shows the artist and passers-by who are confronted with the rapid somersaults of a man reacting similarly in all the cities: amused and bewildered, apprehensive and inquisitive, as well as skeptical and doubting the mental stability of this tumbling man



Fig. 2: Nasan Tur, *Somersaulting man Istanbul-Tokio-Frankfurt-Paris-Mexico City-....*, 2001-2007. 4 digital videos, each 5,5min loop. Courtesy of the artist.

13 Achille Bonito Oliva, ‘The Globalisation of Art’, in *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, edited by Kamal Boullata (London: Saqi Books, 2008), 44.

through the streets and squares of Istanbul, Frankfurt, Mexico City, Paris and Tokyo.

The *Somersaulting man* is an ironic symbol for anything considered different, with which Tur explores the boundaries between the normal and abnormal, acceptable and unacceptable, offering a unique hands-(and body)-on approach to dealing with society at large. Partially touching the ground and partially in air, the act of somersaulting can also be regarded as palintropic, meaning that which “turns again – which keeps turning” which loops back or “turns back on itself” or is “back-stretched” – a going back to oneself, a flipping back to oneself, a sort of system of *renversement*.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the child-like performance of Tur can indeed be seen as the embodiment of the artist going back to him/herself. Tur provides strategies for looking at the many ways in which cultural identity is configured and (re)positioned. This includes the expression of cultural identity through mechanisms that do not necessarily confirm or deny, but rather renounce belief and conviction.

The topic of the self and identity continues in Tur’s oeuvre through one of his latest pieces. *Who am I?* (2017) (Fig. 3) is a continuation of his work that focuses on who we are. Created

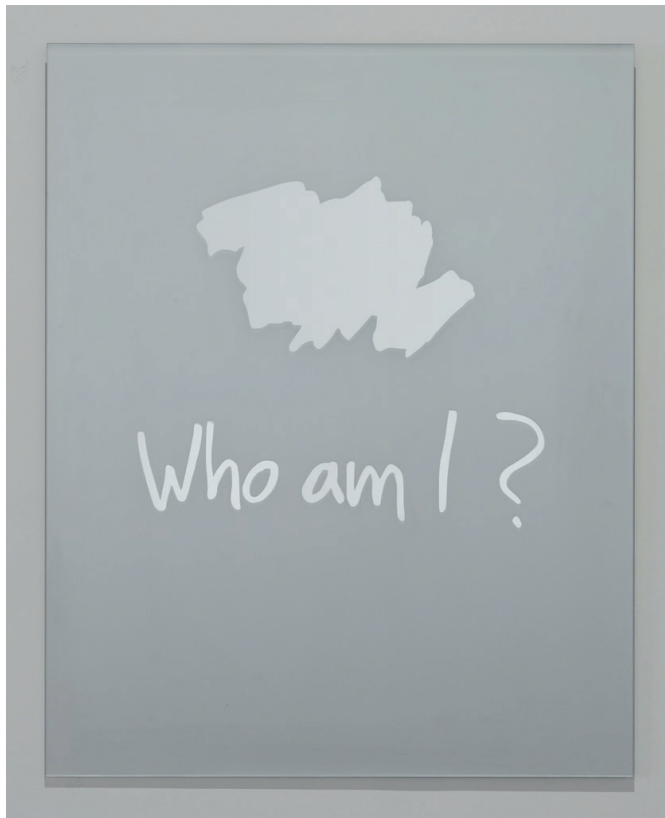


Fig. 3: Nasan Tur, *Who am I?*, 2017. Mirror, 100 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist, and Dirimart, Istanbul and Deweer Gallery, Otegem.

on a (seeming bathroom) mirror that has steamed up and the only part that is visible is cleaned over manually. This is precisely the section of the mirror that visually connects the viewer to the work by allowing to view/see him/herself. Below one sees the question “Who am I?” written as if with a finger on the surface of the steamed mirror. The work creates a genuine conversation with the viewer and asks the fundamental question of who we are. Reminding one of the Libyan poet Khaled Mattawa who in his attempt to sum up his sense of being and belonging writes in his poem *History of my Face*: “Is that my face I see/ reflected in your eyes?”<sup>15</sup> In a gesture reminiscent of cleaning the surface of the mirror and making it visible to the viewer, Tur enables the possibility to get awareness to what it means to see rather than a thing that destructs the ability to

14 Andre Aciman, *False Papers* (New York: Picador, 2001), 139.

15 Khaled Mattawa, ‘History of My Face’, in *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, edited by Kamal Boullata (London: Saqi, 2008), 26.



see (in this case the steam). Reminding us of Mieke Bal's analyses how 'facing' operates visually, socially and metaphorically, where she eventually proposes dialogic 'interfacing' to be the basic principle of intercultural contact as well as a universal foundation for identity and subjectivity. In Bal's own words, "instead of 'to be is to be perceived' and 'I think, therefore I am,' facing proposes, 'I face (you), hence, we are.'"<sup>16</sup> Tur toys with what to show and what to hide, encouraging the audience to consider the moment and the eternal existential question. He lets us ponder the extent to which our sense of (cultural) self is an active inner dialogue of comparison and affinity.

### Anny and Sibel Öztürk

The work of Anny and Sibel Öztürk looks directly at the topic of migration and mobility through the lens of the *Gastarbeiter*. Officially starting with bilateral recruitment agreements in 1961, the influx of guest workers was initially a business transaction between states, originally aimed at recruiting a foreign work force for Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands for a limited period of time with the notion that they would be 'guests' and eventually return to their country of origin. However, this 'transactional migration' in post-war Europe transformed all the countries involved economically, politically, socially, psychologically, and artistically as the duration of stay went beyond the desired period, and as the 'guests' brought over their families, and settled in their new 'homes'.<sup>17</sup> What is of specific interest is how migration with its results as a social and economic phenomenon has recently been represented through the prism of contemporary art. The subject of *Gastarbeiter* creates the crux of *Behind the Wheel* (2003) (Fig. 4) by Anny and Sibel Öztürk. In this installation, the sisters depict the annual trips back to Turkey. Outside is brought inside, and the older model Mercedes Benz with Offenbach license plate is placed in the exhibition space, with its rooftop luggage carrier packed with suitcases and a rolled up carpet on top. The vehicle's interior is decorated with streamers, doilies, blankets, and pillows. One can hear music alongside voices and laughter that remind us of the absent travelers. With maps illustrating the route, drawings (gouaches of moments in the journey), texts on the walls (speaking of longing for the grandfather, the south, the sea), this story tells of the communal experience among the *Gastarbeiter*, presenting us a (re) creation of an annual journey between Germany and Turkey. Through this work, the Öztürk sisters turn their family trips into a collectively shared experience and memory, and their experience and memory into an art installation.

Although *Behind the Wheel* might be viewed as a typical work created by the daughters of guest workers, it is an exception as the two sisters Anny and Sibel Öztürk have a rather different



Fig. 4: Anny and Sibel Öztürk, *Behind the wheel*, 2004. Installation. Courtesy of the artists.

<sup>16</sup> Moslund et al., 13.

<sup>17</sup> Sariaslan 2016.

(hi)story. Anny was born in 1970 in Istanbul and her sister Sibel in Eberbach am Neckar in 1975. As Anny and Sibel recall:

“Our parents left for Germany in 1972. Their decision was made more from a desire for adventure, wanderlust. Both journalists, well off and with one child, they set off to see the world. They did not go to make money. They went to experience something new.”<sup>18</sup>

Both sisters grew up in Germany and studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. When Anny is asked how being born in Istanbul and spending most of her life in Germany has influenced her art, she responds:

“My home is in more than one culture, this fact is a reality for a huge amount of Europeans and by no means an exception. This has a big influence on my work and on the collaboration with my sister Sibel. Many of our works are based on memories. Most of them refer to shared familiar memories. Therefore we have reference fields whose character differentiates in a cultural context, Germany, and Turkey. Both are inextricably linked with each other.”<sup>19</sup>

In pursuit of a better understanding of how ‘belonging’ relates to what Frederick N. Bohrer calls “the globalized, fractured, and transnational world of our time,” Bohrer suggests a “re-thinking [of] the idea of ‘belonging’ and reconnecting it with its linguistic roots.” He informs us that before the English word ‘belonging’ implied ‘possession,’ or ‘some form of ownership,’ it originally meant ‘a much looser sense of correspondence... between two things’ that may be ‘equally long, corresponding in length, running alongside of, parallel to, going along with.’ He goes on to explain that “belonging is not in any sense about necessarily in the same place but rather about two things sharing something significant, wherever they are located” and that ‘belonging’ only becomes evident through some degree of distance, that the two require each other”. Thus, we conclude that the English word originally had *spatial* implications.<sup>20</sup>

What the Öztürk sisters do on a personal level is to record and present their memories and subjective experiences which constitute the basis of the work, and on a general level, the work connects simultaneously with the artistic and non-artistic communities in-and-between these countries, as this is a vision commonly experienced during the summer holidays. *Behind the Wheel* takes the actual mobility of the *Gastarbeiter*, folds and presents it back to us. The cliché of the *Gastarbeiter* family, an image of the Turkish worker and his family going back to the ‘motherland,’ is in front of our eyes. The sisters give an artistic visibility to this journey, spatial implications and its participants although they are physically absent. But where does Turkey stand for these artists? How do they ‘fold’ Turkey into/with Germany? Anny Öztürk responds:

“Our connection to Turkey is strong... in our hearts. The language I use when thinking, dreaming, and speaking is German. My Turkish is more of a foreign language. I always

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18 Angelika Stepken, ‘Anny and Sibel Öztürk in conversation with Angelika Stepken’, in *Sisters and brothers and birds*, edited by Angelika Stepken (Karlsruhe: Europäische Kulturtagung, 2004).

19 Uslar, Rafael von, ‘Anny & Sibel Öztürk’, in *Her Yerde, evinde / At home, wherever*, edited by Jacquelyne Bass et al. (Köln, Istanbul: W. König, Yapı Kredi Publications, 2010).

20 Kamal Boullata, ‘Sharing a Meaning: An Introduction’, in *Belonging and Globalization: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture*, edited by Kamal Boullata (London: Saqi, 2008), 11.



want to live in Germany, but I want to be buried in Turkey with my ancestors, with my family.”<sup>21</sup>

Through their work, we can see how migrants transform geographic and cultural boundaries, and how such ‘travels’ potentially change and challenge presupposed understandings of identity.

### Servet Koçyiğit

Born in Kaman (Central Anatolia), Turkey in 1971 Servet Koçyiğit resided in Ankara while studying engineering at the Middle East Technical University, and then moved to Amsterdam to study at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (1993-1997) and later participated in the De Ateliers residency (1997-1999). Mobility is a focal concept in the work and world of Koçyiğit. “When I decided to study art, I thought I should leave Turkey and find somewhere where I can learn and practice art with much less limitation,” is how the artist describes his move to the Netherlands. After 10 years, he decided to ‘look back’ to Turkey again in spite of feeling that “going back would be a step backward, but as usual in art and life nothing is that linear, a backward step could be a forward one”.<sup>22</sup> During his time in Istanbul, he created pieces that would later be presented in the 9th Istanbul Biennial of 2005. The installation *Blue Side Up* and the accompanying photograph *Eskici* (Bric-a-Brac Seller) became a turning point for the artist, and foreshadowed his future production in relation to Turkey.

*Blue Side Up* (2005) (Fig. 5) challenges the usual artistic presentation format, as



Fig. 5: Servet Koçyiğit, *Blue Side Up*, 2005. Exhibition view 9th Istanbul Biennial, 2005. Dimension Variable, mixed medium, mechanical rail system, hair. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 6: *Sometimes I check the fridge*, 2005. Exhibition view 9th Istanbul Biennial, 2005. Dimension Variable, mixed medium, mechanical rail system, hair. Courtesy of the artist.

21 Ibid.

22 Lora Sariaslan, ‘Seeing and Sewing Maps: The Art of Servet Koçyiğit’, in *Künstlerische Re-Orientierungen: Kontexte zeitgenössischer Kunst in der Türkei und unterwegs*, edited by Burcu Dogramaci and Marta Smolińska (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2017), 137-150.



Fig. 7: Servet Koçyiğit, *Everything*, 2009. Handmade Crochet, 160 x 320 x 10 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 8: Servet Koçyiğit, *East by Night*, 2015. Textile Collage, 120 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the Vehbi Koç Foundation Contemporary Art Collection.

As the hand crochets the letters into words, the movement of the hand, parallels that of how narratives move and circulate. Through a sentence that triggers one's memory, or preconceived notions and past feelings everything one reads and hears, merges with what is in front of them. Certain dichotomies frame this work, masculine and feminine, tradition and modernity, experiences and expectations, past and present. He detaches these dichotomies from their contexts,

it includes a motor and track upon which a broom made from a wig sweeps the exhibition space. The broom goes around the rooms in a monotonous motion, depicting a portrait of feminine domestic life evoking the literal translation of the Turkish phrase 'turning my hair into a broom' used by Turkish housewives to express frustration towards their spouse. Koçyiğit's inspiration of the mundane daily routine of a housewife governs the artwork providing a narrative of everyday existence conditioned by cultural convention and tradition.

There were other components to the installation: a refrigerator with a half open door that had made a dent literally in the floor with its opening and closing with the sentence "Sometimes I check the fridge ten times to see if it is really closed" with its letters made out of crochet (Fig. 6). The laboriousness and repetition of such paranoia is reflected in the intricate stitching, undertaken by two old ladies, to contain a phrase that can be read and checked via the fridge time and time again. After spending weeks working together to create a decoratively patterned text, the final work takes seconds to read and is essentially functionless. It also reveals an essential dichotomy between visual and verbal language highlighting the artist's interest in the value of local crafts and time.

*Everything* (2009) (Fig. 7) embodies the text 'Everything you heard about Turkish men is true' in lace. The perfunctory nature of the statement is no different than the prejudice it affirms. Koçyiğit contrasts this with the slow production process of the lace that women embroider over the course of months.



and then abstracts, critiques, and exaggerates them and then presents them back to us.

Although his work is not limited to it, a survey of Koçyiğit's practice – which in addition to photography includes video installation, sculpture and two-dimensional works – reveals his dedication to exploring nation and belonging according to shifts, overlaps, and unaccountable modifications. His recent engagement with mapping takes his work to a new phase, as the artist comprehends the world around him by surveying, measuring, marking, tracing, collecting and (re)creating information. Adding the representational language of mapping into his long-standing artistic vocabulary of handcraft, Koçyiğit moves into a new territory in his work since 2016: imaginary maps that connect the real geographies to his imagined ones through textiles. He appropriates this system of data compression to depict imaginary geographies on hand-sewn surfaces in his new collages. He initiates a personal investigation into limits, borders crossed, and obstacles that await through this mapping project.

Through his imaginary maps, Koçyiğit creates statements on politics, current affairs, and geography. The intertwined themes of statelessness, citizenship, and migration become key subjects. His works break down the complexities into bite-sized pieces, showing how each part functions in relation to the whole; thus, he proposes an insight into how the system works and, moreover, offers a new version. As he unfolds alternative histories and cultural mappings, he incorporates diverse textiles to weave together different geographies, histories, and presents them on one canvas. Through the colorful pieces of textiles, Koçyiğit constructs political spaces. His art operates through them and also results in them. This is why it is profoundly political, not as a side effect or thematic preoccupation but *qua* art. He reveals what frontiers have done to societies and what societies are doing to frontiers.

Because textiles are portable, wearable and displayable, their performative qualities result in the multivalent meanings that Koçyiğit presents in his work. Textiles internally represent a confluence of messages because they operate within multiple systems of signs/ costume, ceremonies of state, memorial display, and personal / cooperative / national identity to name a few. Perhaps more than any other art form, textiles amplify and even reveal the appreciation of the inherent flexibility of signs. Servet Koçyiğit, well aware of this power, has been searching and acquiring diverse textiles in his motherland of Turkey and this quest (still) continues in the different countries that the artist lives in and visits. *East By Night* (2015) (Fig. 8) is his first work that



Fig. 9: Servet Koçyiğit, *Golden Lining*, 2016. Textile collage, embroidery on textile, paint, 120 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 10: Servet Koçyiğit, *Agent Orange*, 2016. Textile collage, embroidery on textile, paint, ink, 120 x 170 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

distinct fabrics evoke, these painterly collages are their own arbitrary signage systems. Buttons stand for cities, different colors of fabric mark borders, and colors of thread stand for roads, rivers and waterways.

In *Agent Orange* (2016) (Fig. 10), Koçyiğit uses textiles with diverse colored camouflage prints mixed with pink strips that turn into rivers, mountains or oceans through the vibrant blues, or by an orange stitching connoting a borderline. Playful at first sight, upon closer inspection, these pieces turn into an artistic commentary on the current world affairs and suggest the mutating and changing nature of borders, territories, and communities. He once again shows us how textiles are interwoven with notions of identity, status and power through their transformative nature.

When one thinks about the stages in which the work is created, it is not much different than the historical manner in which borders have been created and institutionalized through maps. In different countries, from Turkey to the Netherlands, the artist searches for different textiles, mostly with cultural or historical significance. He cuts the textile, a violent act, in different shapes marking frontiers, limitations and borders. At times, the shapes overlap, or at times extend the frontiers. He has even created a special zone with pink stripes over the land – isolating one zone over the others. Once he completes the textile canvas, he staples it to the stretcher, in a way concretizing his imaginary map. The juxtaposition of motley civilian

illustrates an imaginary territory composed of cotton fabrics with floral designs that are widespread in Turkey.

In *Golden Lining* (2016) (Fig. 9), the dominating material is the Dutch textile created for the former colony of Java produced in the Netherlands, and (ironically) exported to the island. This illogical flow of commerce becomes one level of the work. In addition, the golden thread that dominates the composition becomes a web, similar to the colonial times, and reaches its peak through the depiction of a boat, once again, depicted with golden thread. Its shimmering presence becomes the embodiment of the social, political and economic aspects of the source of the metaphorical golden lining, that of the colonial past. Servet Koçyiğit creates fertilization between the layers of the various textiles rooted in diverse cultures acquired in the Netherlands connoting their colonial past. These differences create images that turn into imaginary maps,

lands and desires. In addition to the specific associations that the usages of these



patterns with those used for soldiers' uniforms highlights the unwelcome truth that the two are seldom if ever separate. Textiles are also an apt metaphor for the fluidity of cultural movement and cultural exchange, since textiles were always in some way included in the trade routes since antiquity. We can also recall the paintings by Venetian artists like Carpaccio from the end of the fifteenth century in which the city is bedecked with sumptuous carpets and its citizens in rich silks and damasks.

Just like in most of Koçyiğit's works, the title has a twofold meaning. The title *Agent Orange* is borrowed from the military and defense system. Agent Orange – or Herbicide Orange (HO) – is one of the herbicides and defoliants used by the U.S. military as part of its herbicidal warfare program, Operation Ranch Hand, during the Vietnam War (1961-1971). The US troops sprayed 72 million liters of herbicides over the surface of South Vietnam. The aim was to deprive the Vietnamese resistance of concealment, and to destroy crops, thereby forcing farmers to leave their lands and thus undermining local support for the guerilla. The most used defoliant was Agent Orange, which was sprayed from airplanes and came down as a white mist. It was given its name from the color of the orange-striped barrels in which it was shipped. Hence, Koçyiğit's title creates a web of connections and affiliations. Moreover, this title perfectly matches the military feel of the work, created through a multiplicity of camouflage textiles that the artist purchased in different markets in the Netherlands. He enriches the composition by the further addition of the different historical sites that ISIS has destroyed in recent times. Simultaneously, by creating imaginary maps, Koçyiğit points out the 'must-haves' of any country, its historical landmarks. However, instead of presenting the ones that exist, he focuses on the destroyed elements, questioning the system of creating nations, borders and landmarks. What happens when they no longer exist, does the country cease to exist, as it was once known?

Playing immaterial subjectivities against the map's conventional material objectivity, these works confront us with both likeness and strangeness. The places they map are very much the ones we inhabit. Whether or not we belong in them, they represent a world that surely belongs to us. Furthermore, they show a conception that fuses uncertainties, fears about place, with physical and locational complexities involved in mapping.

We can call Servet Koçyiğit's maps organic not only to emphasize their paradoxical realism, but also their inherent openness to subjectivity. The act of viewing itself becomes a sort of transnational movement. In contrast with the daunting objectivity of political maps, Koçyiğit presents a subjective, even living map, which contains the same places but in the way we really know them, in relation to our own changeable location. It is not a map where we can find our home or point of origin more easily, but rather, and far more valuably, one where we can locate ourselves, as we move, here and now. Koçyiğit's work is full of fascinating plays on mapping. It questions almost every aspect of the ostensibly shared world the traditional map enforces. His maps do not retreat from describing the world in familiar geographic terms; rather, they have additional elements, which overlay, and undermine established conventions.

Koçyiğit does not reject or erase his context of origin, but rather employs his background, experiences and encounters as the sources from and through which he can create both an individual as well as artistic agency. Servet Koçyiğit reflects on the meaning of place – a reflection linked to his own autobiography. He generates a new way of looking at the fragmented reality that makes up our present. The artist's commitment to charting new territory signals a shift

in artistic language, and taking the idea of mapping in its broadest sense, initiates a personal investigation into the limits and borders crossed, as well as the dangers and obstacles that await.

### A (possible) conclusion

One must not see the hyphenated identities of European-Turkish, as a binary but on the opposite as a composite, as a combination. What brings these artists together is the fact that they do not reject or erase their contexts, but instead, (they) are taking and using their background, feelings, experiences, and encounters as the source to create both an individual as well as artistic means to, not only, engage the viewer, but also, to challenge the *doxa* on a transnational level. Both migration and artistic praxis are far from a uniform or evenly shared experience. Hence, the trajectories of these artists involve not just a rethinking of the Turkish artscape, but also that of Europe, invoking a whole new transnational and transitional space within which the artist is both an observer and an author. These snapshots enable us to highlight the creative function of art as well as the potentialities and consequences of approaching art and migration from a variety of aesthetic frames of thought and modes of experience that interact with, challenge, contribute to or expand the perspectives on migration provided by sociological, political or historical discourses and analyses.<sup>23</sup>

What the theater scholar Azadeh Sharifi writes about European theater and players might be a relevant lens, as the focused visual artists help us “advocate a ‘post-migrant aesthetic’ that can help transform the exclusive self-conception of European art towards a more inclusive and manifold consistency.”<sup>24</sup> These artists have ventured out of the confines of ‘assigned’ representations and have allowed themselves to explore the ever-shifting topography of belonging and non-belonging. As a feature, or a quality of a world in which mobility is not the exception but becoming the standard, art is a method that these artists use to root themselves in various regions of Europe. Mobility is imperative to their endless pursuit of transformation and change. Point of departure is the observation that migratory experience cuts across and connects that, which is usually considered to be separate entities. The hyphenated artists that have been the focus, bring these qualities together. Their work convey the complex and stratified character of today’s society, and reflect a composite world, with fluid borders and broadened horizons, a world permeated by tension, but one that is culturally rich and fascinating. These artists re-examine, reflect, and narrate multiple identities, geographical imaginations, and experiences as their work carries traces of diverse cultures, languages, codes, traditions, and challenges. Their artistic practice succeeds in generating a private and public recognition and invokes a new form of citizenship based on art – a citizenship that both defines a new identity, but also can be the basis for agency and life strategy.

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23 Moslund et al., 10.

24 Moslund et al., 19.

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# Intercultural Spaces, Transcultural Spaces, and Transliteratures

Graciela Susana Boruszko

- Abstract** Globalization challenged the notion of borders redefining migration, confinement and (im) mobility. Nowadays, the 'self' and the 'other' meet in a 'neutral' space where geographies and landscape merge hosting the dialogue in a welcoming space that while defying a definite description opens itself up for exploration. Our world is characterized by pluralities, by spaces that are less and less defined, by messages that circulate in an undefined cyberspace in multiple languages, in exchanges that are closer and closer to a simultaneous dialogue where words and thoughts that represent multicultural spaces escape being defined as a geographical space while nonetheless painting a unique landscape. I will explore these concepts, as I will analyze the transliterary process of migration of stories, cultures and cultural artifacts centering my study in the transcultural space. I will analyze this figurative and objective geographical space. I will study how the story after being confined to a class perception, to cultural stereotypes thus being held immobile, then thanks to the creation of a transliterary space, the story migrates and participates in the globalized dialogue that transcends the literary realm of origin. This literary and cultural migration take place in a landscape that represents the transitional aspect of the literary transaction creating a unique geographical landscape and space that I will explore in detail.
- Keywords** migration, transliteratures, intercultural space, transcultural space, transliterary space, displacement, mobility, literature, film, emerging perspectives
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.8



“...lo reconozco, y este reconocimiento arruina en mí el poder de conocer,  
el derecho de percibir,  
de lo inasible hace también lo indesprendible,  
lo inaccesible que no puedo dejar de esperar,  
lo que no puedo tomar sino sólo retomar, y no dejar nunca.”

Maurice Blanchot (2004:23)

“L'enfer c'est les autres.”

Jean-Paul Sartre, Huis Clos (1962:190)

We are migrant... Our world is presented to us in pluralities, in spaces not well defined, in messages that circulate the cybernetic space in multiple languages, in almost simultaneous times, in a superposition of crossings of words and thoughts that represent a multiculturalism that in spite of being rambunctiously announced it is still not clearly defined.

The axis of study of this article is centered in the communication processes between the “self” and “the other” that belonging to different cultures, a different time and reality, establish communication within new transnational patterns. In this article by analyzing in the story *Amé...Rick*, I will discuss how the Moroccan, American and French cultures intersect again in a transliterary and transnational space that embodies the XXI century approach to exchanges, having *Casablanca* as a backdrop representing a unilateral vision of the exotic other. These transliterary exchanges, while formulated at different levels of understanding are transported from a space to another trespassing from the cultural structure that gestated them into new spaces.

In this article, I will explore the concepts and the transliterary process of migration of stories, cultures and cultural artifacts centering my study in the transcultural space. On the first part of this article I will analyze the concepts and scenarios of the transliterary and transcultural event.

On the first part I will analyze progressively the context of the transcultural and transliterary contexts of the literary work *Amé...Rick*. In the first section, *Shared literary spaces* I will discuss the characteristics and function of the transliterary space, while on the following section *Intercultural spaces, transcultural spaces* I will study how the intercultural space becomes a transcultural space thus actively propitiating a transliterary exchange in an intimate “communion” between the participants, to finish with the section *Transliterations* where I conclude elaborating the framework of the transcultural space and the transliterary as they host the literary work that I will proceed to analyze.

On the second part, I will study this figurative and objective geographical and literary space in the work *Amé...Rick* by Ahmed Ararou and the film *Casablanca*. I chose this story because while it connects with the filmic production *Casablanca*, while conveying a new approach to



the transcultural communication in the XXI century. I will study how the plot in *Casablanca* after being confined to cultural stereotypes and thus being held immobile, then thanks to the creation of a new transliterary space, the story migrates and participates in the globalized dialogue that even transcends the literary realm of origin. This literary and cultural migration take place in a landscape that represents the transitional aspect of the literary transaction creating a unique geographical landscape, the transcultural space, that I will explore in detail.

When the story enters the cultural space of “the other” it displays characteristics that by transmuting themselves become “strange” parading themselves as “otherness.” Then the story is interpreted by the “listening self” using previous referential knowledge of “the other” in order to interpret the message with more or less accuracy and skill. It is in this way, that the cultures manifest themselves in intercultural spaces, where a culture with very permeable borders receives the manifestation of another culture in a shared space by both, that is to say the intercultural space. The exchange and dialogue are established by the receiving cultural space as well as by the emitting cultural space that create an in-between space. This mobile space is temporarily established in each transcultural and transliterary exchange, comprising the characteristics of emission and reception that each interlocutor or interlocutors will assign to it. This space by being created between the two parties becomes intimate since the dialogue established is always a reciprocal space that nonetheless could be made public. The instability of this intercultural space of exchange lays in the will of each interlocutor to communicate in the moment. In future exchanges this space can be re-established adopting either the same or new norms of communication. As the interlocutors get to know each other establishing nexus with more frequency reinforcing their will to communicate, these transcultural spaces acquire more stable characteristics, and in this scenario, expectations start to arise.

### Shared literary spaces

Literature participates in the convocations that are established in the framework of “shared spaces” where the participants are not in closed spaces but rather they are open to the exchanges in “open air” where the dialogues transpose pre-established barriers. The atmosphere that surrounds this space is constituted by a certain curiosity born in the “not knowing” that convokes the “other or others” in order to know what “the other” knows from an attitude of sharing. It is then that the spaces open up, and the communication or a reciprocal exchange is established and validated within a shared space. Cultures and literatures touch each other in the human space that convoked them.

The hypercultural space is the space that literature uses to represent or show the text gestated in a unilateral space. This hypercultural space while presenting varied cultural characteristics is inhabited by “the self” and “the other” that using technology as the media, emit and receive messages.

The most remarkable effect has been the tendency to combined and transversal readings, the promotion of esthetic and literary models coming from diverse sources.

“... encuentran ya en el fin de siglo las primeras respuestas estéticas de jóvenes plenamente sincronizados con el siglo XXI y son

“...they find at the end of the century the first esthetic answers of young people completely synchronized with the XXI century



nativos digitales.

El efecto más saludable ha sido la tendencia a las lecturas combinadas y transversales, a la alimentación de modelos estéticos y literarios desde fuentes muy diversas.” (Gracia 1939-2010:272)

and they are digital natives.”

(Translation by the author)

This staging assembles at the same time a “not knowing” that is interested in listening or reading a “knowledge” that represents the cultural and literary conceptions of the surroundings of the receptor. It is precisely in this ambivalent axe that the message is unfold in multiple layers in order to respond to a reception that is conceived at several levels. The semantic transfer is enriched by the intercultural and transliterary articulation and manifestation, as it involves not only the present time of the execution but the memories or the canonical readings that incite the receptors to travel between different times. Such complexity inflames those that being seduced by the “pursuing of knowledge” venture to live this unique experience that can only be repeated within new parameters.

“Todo relato parte de la realidad, pero establece una relación distinta entre lo real y lo inventado: en el relato ficticio domina esto último; en el real, lo primero. Para crear la suya propia, el relato ficticio anhela emanciparse de la realidad; el real permanecer cosido a ella. Lo cierto es que ninguno de los dos puede satisfacer su ambición: el relato ficticio siempre mantendrá un vínculo cierto con la realidad, porque de ella nace: el relato real, puesto que está hecho con palabras, inevitablemente se independiza en parte de la realidad. (...) No importa: después de todo, uno no viaja para llegar, sino para disfrutar el viaje.” (Cercas 200):13-17)

“Every story opening up in reality establishes a unique relation between that reality and what is fictional: in the fictional narration fiction dominates; in the real narrative, reality. In order to create its own reality, the fictional narrative longs to emancipate itself of reality that represents permanence. The truth is that none of them could satisfy their ambition; the fictional narrative will always keep its ties with reality, because it was born in it: the reality’s narrative, because it is constructed with words, unavoidably frees itself from reality (...) It does not matter: after all, we do not journey to arrive, but rather to enjoy the trip.”

(Translation by the author)

The transliterations are not only originated and received in intercultural spaces, but contrary to the physical restrictions that frame the individual, are spread in a space that trespasses the physical and geographical borders conquering a broader identitarian space. Technology comprises that what is textual, mental, corporal, human and the technological in a virtual space that we perceived as natural and personal in spite of distances. This proliferation of spaces and frequencies creates in the individual a variety of answers to these intercultural exchanges that are experienced with a certain dose of aggressiveness since they are perceived as an invasion of what existing further away, all of a sudden is present in the proximity of the individual, while hastening through the process of elaborating an immediate response. Amelia Sanz Cobrerizo explains it further.



“No parece haber definición esencialista posible, sino lugares complejos para una identidad multidimensional fabricada a partir de pertenencias, préstamos y consumos para una síntesis personal.” (Sanz 2008:15)

“It seems that there is no essential possible definition, but rather complex places for a multidimensional identity created out of belongings, loans and consumptions for a personal synthesis.”  
(Translation by the author)

That is how the individual identity fissures when facing “the other” multiple times and in diverse spaces. In each of these encounters “the self” responds to “the other” and finds in “the other” a part of the “self,” and in this way the personal sense of identity keeps being reconstructed since at times it is being affected by an unexpected polysemy. Amin Maalouf elaborates in this topic in his work: *Las identidades asesinas*.

“¿Es realmente necesario en este fin de siglo que la afirmación de sí mismo implique con tanta frecuencia la negación de los demás? (...)”

Si el individuo cuya lengua estoy aprendiendo no respeta la mía, hablar su idioma deja de ser para mí un acto de apertura, se convierte en un acto de sumisión.” (Maalouf, 1998:56)

“Is it really necessary at the end of this century that the affirmation of the self implies so frequently the negation of all the others? (...) If the individual, whose language I am learning does not respect mine, to speak his or her language is no longer an act of openness, it becomes an act of submission.”  
(Translation by the author)

Within a politicized globalization it is necessary that each individual in each exchange or negotiation, admits all marginalized element into his or her own center fashioning a conceptual and practical marginalization that overburdens the individual, creating simultaneously a complexity in the perception and handling of the interculturality. Claudio Magris explains it:

“...que la literatura, entre otras cosas, es también un viaje en busca de la refutación del mito del otro lado, para comprender que cada uno se encuentra ora de este lado ora del otro- que cada uno, como en un misterio medieval es el “Otro.” (Magris 2001:43)

“... that literature among other things, is also a journey in search of the rebuttal of the myth of the other side, in order to understand that each one is either on this side or on the other side- that each one, as in a Medieval mystery is the “Other.”  
(Translation by the author)

According to Raymond Williams, in relation to the meaning of culture, we find ourselves in a process of approaching and being in contact with individuals creating a net of shared meanings. Culture, then is conceived as an animated connection, that based in intuition, is defined in each exchange and in each space that is established. The internal and external spaces simultaneously transport dynamic currents that carry a cluster of semiotic systems in synchrony. This process is illustrated in the literature of the *Pateras* in Spain as Soler-Espiauba explains it:

“La Palabra de los *Sin-Palabra* en el Estrecho (Estrecho de Gibraltar) todavía no ha

“The Word of the *Sin-Palabra* or silenced in the Strait (Strait of Gibraltar) still has



llegado hasta nosotros. Aún no existe *su* literatura de patera. En el sentido de la palabra del sacrificio, surgida del mismo sacrificio como acto, como acción, en donde la palabra desempeñaría su papel. No como Palabra-Acción-voz de la víctima-. Hoy por hoy, estamos escribiendo en la orilla norte; sobre la patera, no desde la patera.” (Solter-Espiauba 2001:70)

not reached us. *Their* literature of *patera* is still inexistent. In the sense of the word sacrifice, emerging of the same sacrifice as an act, as an action, where the word would play its role. Not as Word-Action-victim’s voice. Today, we are writing on the North shore: on the *patera*, not from the *patera*.” (Translation by the author)

### Intercultural spaces, transcultural spaces

The cultural contacts in intercultural spaces assure a plurality of socio-semantic meanings, of symbolic forms that defy curiosity and at the same time manifest a cognitive dissonance. The plurality aspect, that is distinctive of the interculturality, is a characteristic of the emission of the cultural messages that could cause more confusion than clarify the tenants and that is why the intercultural aspect is centered in the relational aspect of this exchange. It is this characteristic that will contribute to the propagation of the transliterations. Diversity displays the kaleidoscopic panorama of multiculturalism but it stops there. The intercultural space creates a place and a moment for the conversation, for the exchange of ideas, for the pause, for the encounter. Literature nourishes itself out of these moments while escaping the deafening polemics of the cultural pluralism that fights against the stereotypes and prejudices, racism, xenophobia and other obstacles in order to access a shared dialogue. It would seem that that what is multi- or pluri- precede what is inter-, while sharing all three, three essential points in the process of creation of a space auspicious for the encounter. After having established a certain “understanding” of what is diverse and multiple, and after the participants are in a position of being comfortable to participate, to contribute, and to receive in the exchange, (even though those goals are temporary), they seek their integration. In this way, they establish the bases for a more permanent combination that would be attained by the assiduity of the transliterary convocations in the intercultural spaces. These intercultural spaces present themselves in parallel to other intercultural spaces where the communication is established in different practices of relation between the participants.

“Como una primera vía para organizar esta diversidad de situaciones, y repensar la impotencia que induce la lejanía o la abstracción de los vínculos, propongo tomar en cuenta el esquema con que Craig Calhoun, y luego Ulf Hannerz (1998), reformulan la antigua oposición entre *Gemeinschaft* y *Gesellschaft*, entre comunidad y sociedad. La globalización ha complejizado la distinción entre relaciones primarias, donde se establecen vínculos directos entre personas, y relaciones secundarias, que ocurren entre

“As a first step to organize this diversity of situations and in order to rethink the impotence that induces the remoteness of the abstraction of the links, I propose to take into account the scheme that Craig Calhoun, and then Ulf Hannerz (1998), reformulate the old opposition between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between community and society. Globalization has made more complex the distinction between *primary relations*, where direct nexus are established between individu-



funciones o papeles desempeñados en la vida social. El carácter indirecto de muchos intercambios actuales lleva a identificar relaciones terciarias, mediadas por tecnologías y grandes organizaciones. (...) ...las relaciones cuaternarias, en las que una de las partes no es consciente de la existencia de la relación: acciones de vigilancia, espionaje, ...” (García 2009:29)

als, and *secondary relations*, that happen between functions or social roles. The indirect nature of many current exchanges help to identify *TERTIARY relations*, using technologies and big organizations as the medium. (...) ... the *quaternary relations*, where one side is not conscientious of the existence of the relation: like in espionage or surveillance...”

(Translation by the author)

In the same way, the contexts of the crossing of cultures and literatures could present a great variety of manifestations. Some of them can become conflictive or cordial or even opposing, but what matters is the “crossing” from one culture to another or several others. These crossings mark the take off of one literature to translate from a culture of origin into another culture that is going to host this literature. Being at the threshold of a new culture, it allows the participants to meet in a territory that is going to be defined within the frame of “the meeting” and not within the differences that each participant brings to the literary event. The expectations are thus centered in the “encounter” and not in marking the differences that would generate a series of judgments that would interrupt the process of approaching “the other.”

This literary process of approaching and conviviality reflects the biblical encounters in the tabernacle. The physical characteristics of the tabernacle in the Bible denoted great attention to symbolic detail nonetheless the artistic aspect carried also great importance because they had color, texture and design. All the components of the design conformed a unity that did not correspond to a strategy of achieving uniformity, but rather to an effort to stimulate the encounter between the participants that belonged to two different spheres, the human and the divine. This encounter allowed them to share for a limited time, and after that, each one will go back into their own worlds of origin. This encounter was organized around a ritual where both parties would prepare themselves for it. Both parties knew what was required from them beforehand, since they were taking into account the difference in power and hierarchy. The biblical tabernacle, that was a temporal residence, serve as a reference to the literary residence or a cinematographic production where thoughts or ideas are lodged until they are shared in an open reading or viewing or in an active exchange of impressions and opinions. The tripartite construction of the tabernacle helped to separate the times and spaces that guided the agreed approaching process of both parties. The intercultural spaces, in the same manner, establish times and processes where there is a “coming together” in the reading activity that is where the understanding takes place, then there is a reflection where there is a pondering on what is in front of the reader, and finally there is a conclusion of summary thoughts where what was known before and what is incorporated as new are capitalized. In this way, during the encounter there is a merge of “what was previously known,” “what was received as new,” and “what prospered in the mind of each receiver.” Thus, the balance is not a mathematical one but constitutes a process of “approaches” to the “other”, being it “the other thinking” or “the one being described in the text” in order to arrive to a point of temporal conviviality that will leave footprints on both parties. Antonio Machado explained this process in poetic form:



“Caminante, son tus huellas  
el camino, y nada más;  
caminante, no hay camino,  
se hace camino al andar.  
Al andar se hace camino,  
y al volver la vista atrás  
se ve la senda que nunca  
se ha de volver a pisar.  
Caminante, no hay camino,  
sino estelas en la mar.”  
(Machado 2006:34)

“Wanderer, your footsteps are  
the road, and nothing more;  
wanderer, there is no road,  
the road is made by walking.  
By walking one makes the road,  
and upon glancing behind  
one sees the path  
that never will be trod again.  
Wanderer, there is no road--  
Only wakes upon the sea.”  
(Translation by the author)

This same image is found again in the biblical narrative in the New Testament. The physical tabernacle of the Old Testament that hosted the divine presence and the human presence simultaneously becomes from a geographical, external place to an intimate place inside the individual. Jesus is presented as the Word.

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14 New International Version (NIV))

This image of the incarnation of the “Word” is related to the image of the reader that while being in an external space during the reading activity, he or she creates an internal space for the reflection establishing “the self” as an image of a “literary tabernacle.” This literary space is a representation of a space dedicated to accomplish a specific task within the framework of an exchange, taking place in a definite space and time that Bhabha described as “hybrid.” Within this dialogue and exchange there are three phases as defined by the Latin American theorists Angel Rama and Fernando Ortiz.

“Transculturación e interculturación son conceptos que aparecieron siguiendo los pasos del término *aculturación* y como reacción contra él, para expresar las negociaciones interacciones e intercambios complejos entre individuos y grupos en situación de contacto. En los años 40, el antropólogo cubano Fernando Ortiz propuso el uso de la palabra *transculturación* para los objetos amerindios que no sólo fueron preservados en la cultura de origen, sino adoptados y desarrollados en la cultura receptora europea, noción que ha sido recuperada por los estudios literarios para designar aquellas palabras e ideas que atraviesan las culturas y las transforman, o incluso para marcar los

“Transculturation and interculturalization are concepts that emerged following the steps of the term *acculturation* and as a reaction against this last one, in order to express the complex negotiations, interactions and exchanges among individuals and groups of individuals that found themselves in contact with others. In the 40s, the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz proposed the use of the word *transculturalization* in relation to the Amerindian objects that were not only preserved in the original cultures but adopted and developed in the European receiving culture. This notion was recuperated by the literary studies to specify the words and ideas that cross cultures



lugares de confrontación y transformación  
culturales” (Ortiz 2002: 10)

being transformed and even to mark places  
of cultural confrontation and transforma-  
tion.”

(Translation by the author)

Transculturation is the answer to a limited comparison, from a position that self-described to a certain extent as superior, where parameters of inclusion and exclusion are established, or even within a comparative framework where “the other” is limited. Transculturation works towards assuring to count with a wealth of interdisciplinary “crossings,” with the intention of finding in this multiplicity of voices and parameters, a way to establish dialogues among all parties, in a neutral space where the objective is the dialogue. The displacement of the focal point of that which is primarily literary towards a cumulus of interactions that will contribute to establish an exchange much more robust and productive in a transnational, globalized world, is favored by technologies of communication already structured in a similar manner.

In this way, the transculturality creates new spaces of interaction being of consensus or dis-sension or both simultaneously in nature. “The other” undergoes a transformation, becoming constantly in movement in such a way that presents himself as an irreproducible protagonist even when he would be called to participate in different transcultural exchanges. The simultaneous interdisciplinary, plurivocal, “crossings” create an irreproducible nexus of temporal exchanges that are marked by fragility of consumption within the complexity of the multiple contributions to the establishment of a transcultural moment where the transliterations find their apogee. This space without borders or obstacles calls for protagonists that find their personal security in the freedom of knowing their own identity and enjoy the same freedom to invite “the other” to a hospitable dialogue as equals. Transliterations show themselves in the open framework of an honest and loyal dialogue among all participants in the exchange since all have the objective to host and receive “the other” in their “otherness” thus favoring understanding and welcoming. Criticism and critical comparisons are excluded from this event given the fact that the aim is that through a humble approach “the self” arrives “to see” the other and at the same time, “the self” lets himself or herself be seen.

The meanings handled in this encounter will be marked necessarily by the imprint of all participants since the “crossings” of interpretations will be much more frequent and more intense in the synchrony of their formulation. This synchrony is what avoids the duality of thought, perception and criticism leading to a dual reflection. This “third space” of inclusion is where a multidirectional dialogue can be accomplished.

The imagination exercised in the conception of literatures that emigrate from a cultural sphere to another find in the transliterary and in the transcultural spaces the ideal context to unfold once again, the magic of imagination that had previously transgressed the borders of reality in order to establish itself in a more expansive dimension. The literary text that is interpreted in this non-dual space preserves and enriches the networks of meaning that escape what is structured in a duality, consummating itself in the relational conceptions of these networks of meaning. The text folds and unfolds itself offering hidden meanings to those that dare to cross the disciplinary or national boundaries in order to appreciate them in freedom, thus imitating the gestation of the text until the moment when it manages to impose itself to the writer as a reality, after proposing itself repeatedly as the most suitable alternative to any other existent or emerging proposal.



The intercultural space escapes the system of cartographies. It is undeniable that there are many characteristics that help to define it while at the same time it cannot be located neither in the temporality nor in the spatiality of the cultural or literary fields. In order to introduce the transliterations in this context, the intercultural space should be accessed because no other space could host this event where “the own” and that “belonging to the other” suffer a transmutation as in the Eucharist that without stopping from having physical characteristics incorporates supernatural symbolism, establishing a “communion” among the participants. The partakers coming from different dimensions and backgrounds leave aside their individual natures to favor an approach auspicious to the encounter rather than aiming to accommodate the individualities represented in the event.

That which is trans- indicates the process of that which circulates beyond the sphere of origin, denoting a process of transposing borders as well as the fact of being beyond the borders. This prefix not only connotes movement but also indicates relationship. The literature that emigrates from the original axe mobilizes itself a space of reception signed by the multiplicity of cultural and semantic crossings among others, creating dialogues and new semantic connections between the participants of the encounter. This staging of meetings shows unique characteristics in each encounter of the transliterations creating a dynamic approach to the transliterary experience favoring the constitution of a plurality of models. The projection of the encounter takes a diagonal direction where a variety of interpretation converge in synchrony creating paradigms of open dialogues and multiple transgressions thus eliminating the dualistic approach that would create situations of conflict instead of relationships. Within the multiplicity of crossings, much more robust dialogues are established since multiple perspectives participated in the process. This model would imitate the model that the latest technologies have proposed through the networks of social media. This image of a “net” suggests the activity of “surfing” or “fishing.” While fishing, the individual uses its ingenuity in order to intervene in the natural process of the life of the fish that uses its senses of speed, power, and prowess that nature provided, so that it would resist becoming prey. This image represents with much judgment, the activity of the individual that searches and selects what is found in the network of relationships and exchanges that takes place inside the sphere of what is trans-, of what circulates in the structure of multi- that is dynamic or trans- where the ancestral human culture and the “animal” or “natural” behavior meet in a dynamic way. The notion of network at the same time suggests the intention of catching small prey like fish rather than big prey reflecting thus the fragmented nature of the messages that circulate in the networks (trans-) where the messages superpose creating varied semantic strata in essence and origin converging in the literary event.

### **Transliterations**

The transliterary practice is marked by a much broader and inclusive genealogy than the trajectory of the national literatures or any other category of literatures. Even if the transliterary concept would seem to trickle down to a limiting definition, it could be argued that from its literary conception, this literature presents scenarios that could be interpreted by different groups in different ways as in a preparation for a synchronic crossing of dialogues and meanings realized in a diverse polyphony. Once the transliterary space is established in a transcultural space (ideal



space for its unfolding) it exercises the freedom imprinted in the text in order to circulate in the multiple spaces of reception. Thus, the transliterary space submits itself to new diachronic intersections of heteroglossias and unstable meanings establishing at the same time productive transpositions that are exercised from a social or unconscious macro system.

Polyphony is one of the most remarkable innate marks of the transliterature that enlarges the crossing of messages without stunning or deranging the participants. They anticipate this event where the voice of “the other” is denaturalized incorporating differences, contradictions, and inequalities, in the process of conforming a message built precisely within a polyphony frame. It should be noted in this polyphony, the participation of the voices that reveal the construction of meaning. In this transcultural production, it appears somehow the conversation among the different languages of the writer being it in an explicit or implicit way, without conveying translations but rather weaved in the text.

In an era when the juxtaposition is the model that better adapts to the relationships of all kinds due to the fact that the simultaneity imposes itself to the spatial and temporal distances, the transliterations insert themselves very well in the plurivocal sphere of semantic structures that emerge from combined strata. Memory represents one of those strata that by incorporating itself to the semantic construction and by interjecting stories retold in the polyphonic chorus of the history of humanity, it comes back to life in a hyperspace that can host and connect it in an intimate way within the semantic synchrony of the juxtaposition of stories. Michel Foucault defined them as “the heterotopias as systems of opening and closing that isolates them and made them also permeable in time transforming them in heterochronies” “...las heterotopías como sistemas de apertura y cierre que las aísla y las vuelve penetrables también en el tiempo convirtiéndolas en heterocronías.” (Foucault 1984:46-49) Although transliterature favors the crossing of information, it localizes itself in a transcultural space and in a temporality of operation contrary to blogs, messengers and others that displace the exchange. It would seem that transliterature keeps intact its mission of “showing itself” in a certain framework nonetheless this framework exhibits an open structure. The parameters of hierarchy are lost in the exposure to many voices but it is not displaced totally since the transcultural space allows the free circulation of cultures convoked to the “literary event.”

In this framework, the literary story is manifested in a conceptual frame as procreation since it surpasses the practices of reality proposing new parameters that suggest a supra- or hyper- reality that frames rather a cognitive system than a literary story. Transliteration presents innate characteristics that are flexible, dynamic, relational, with a strong convening power, very participatory, unique and irreproducible in its totality, that points to the transliterature as a byproduct of advancement not only technological but also indicates a direction and performance towards what is multidirectional merging into the literary experience contextualized in its maximum expression. Nonetheless, the juxtaposition is promptly surpassed by establishing nexus among the voices participating that are effortlessly established given the permeability of the proposed exchanges in view of the fact that the discourse do not remain localized excluding the inside and outside, the near and far options creating a changing and mobile textuality. These characteristics seduce all the participating voices that do not cease to imagine new “spaces” in a collaborative network where new transcultural “events” could take place convoking new languages, connecting new works, avoiding binary relationships, and adjusting itself



to the multi-linearity of the transliterature that presents itself in a complex dialogue.

Symbols, ideologies, traditions do not cease to redefine themselves in the freedom of these exchanges, accelerating the enrichment of the transliterature that does not cease to procreate and generate new meanings, new structures, where the verbs link and knit together, connect, dialogue, journey, wander, reflect, manifest, inside an axe of “traversing or cutting across,” proposing new ventures, the conquest of new spaces, the dynamo of an experience that materializes while executing it while seducing to continue in the same line taking into account that the options are limitless.

In this trajectory the objective is no longer the text that becomes an excuse or pathway because the destiny is now “the other.” This “other” never ceases to seduce, to incite “the self” to go to meet the “other,” to fascinate with a presence that is announced, suggested, imagined, presenting itself as semi covered, that attracts without letting be completely apprehended. The journey towards this encounter continues within the phenomenology of the strange by an intermediary dialogue in order to establish both; that what is “belonging to the other,” and that which is “mine,” in a sort of communion where what is common will prevail after having enjoyed what was strange without neglecting to preserve the communion established.

The term “communion” is associated with the religious sphere that combines in it the concepts of hospitality and having supper. This same meaning permeates the transliterary event since it acts as an invitation as well as a host to “break bread” with the other. In Genesis 14:18,19 there is the narration of the exchange in a transcultural space where the bread is the symbol of the communion between the two characters, Melchizedek and Abram that represent two “universes” the spiritual realm and the real world realm.

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,  
‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
Creator of heaven and earth.’”  
(Gen. 14.18-19, NIV)

It is here, in this space of dialogue, where the borders between what belongs to the other and what is mine are erased without merging but rather becoming an opening, giving access to what was inaccessible.

### Study of *Amé...Rick* by Ahmed Ararou

This narrative is part of the compilation of stories entitled *La Puerta de los vientos. Narradores marroquíes contemporáneos*. (Cerezales 2004) The title of the book that hosts the stories refers to a door located in the Almohad Walls in Rabat.

“Hay, en la muralla almohade de Rabat, una puerta a la que llaman en árabe Bab Ruah, lo que podría traducirse al castellano como ‘puerta de los vientos,’ o también como ‘la puerta de los espíritus.’” (Cerezales 2004:11)

“There is, in the Almohad Walls of Rabat, a door that is called in Arab *Bab Ruah*, that could be translated in Spanish “the door of the winds,” and also as “the door of the spirits.”  
(Translation by the author)



Starting with the space that collects the narratives suggests a transcultural space since a door is the meeting place, at the threshold between two cultures, the Moroccan and the Spanish cultures. A door constitutes an access consequently it connotes the trans- aspect of the transition that stops or pauses at this place in order to meet “the other.” Generally the doors that connect two physical spaces are used also as a symbol of entrance to spiritual spaces of great meaning given their characteristics of opening and closing spaces, of revealing and hiding at the same time. In this description the door presents a character that controls it: the wind. The wind in order to circulate in freedom requires that the door remains open. Since the wind is an unpredictable element, to a certain extent ensures the permanent position of being open that given its location also warrants a permanent circulation of the wind. The wind is an image of the “spirit” of the people thus in this symbol merge the physical and the spiritual giving the encounter a deeper meaning. Beyond being a literary space where the intimate human thought is hosted it also represents the physical world of the cultural spaces that associate with the guests of this transcultural event recorded in a narrative that announces itself in a transliterary framework since the Moroccan author will approach the American world through the spirit of a cinematographic production of the 40’s the film *Casablanca*. In the prologue of this book it is mentioned that this door is close to the sea.

“Una de las historias que se cuentan para explicar su nombre dice que éste se debe a que la puerta se halla próxima al mar y que allí se nota especialmente la brisa oceánica.”  
(Cerezas 2004:11)

“One of the stories that are told in order to explain its name, indicates that this is due to the fact that the door is close to the sea and that in this door it is especially noticeable the ocean breeze.”  
(Translation by the author)

The literary spaces are explained through the literary narrative since they are transcultural spaces that host the transliterations. These spaces are spaces of transit that are anchored in nature associating the Mediterranean Sea to the Mediterranean wind. The natural and physical space of the Mediterranean Sea and the characteristic winds announce the transience of a space of great circulation of vessels that converge in this sea to pursue all kinds of enterprises, from commerce to tourism or scientific missions. The great circulation and transit make this space an ideal place to the meeting of cultures and literatures that circulate and navigate converging temporally in a shared space. It also suggests a limited temporality of these encounters because the space that they share is always an unstable space of transit. This very image we find in the biblical narrative of the creation of the world where it is narrated that God designed the world in three spheres: the sky or heavens, the land and the ocean.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.  
The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”  
(Gen. 1:1-2, NKJV)

In this way the beginning of the biblical narrative and this compilation of stories coincide in mentioning the same elements that would suggest similar demarcations of the physical and literary spaces. The image of the spirit of God hovering over the surface of the waters coincides



with the “wind” of the spirits of the writer and the reader that congregate in the transliterary space. The space of the land also presents a diversity of the human presence in this area that constitutes a strategic site.

“Todo Marruecos, o en árabe Maghrib-al-aqsa (“el extremo occidente”) por su emplazamiento en ese filo noroeste del continente africano, asomado a la vez al Atlántico y al Mediterráneo, y de cara a Europa, puede encerrarse en esa metáfora. Es la puerta de todos los vientos, por la que entra el poniente y sale el levante que se alternan en el Estrecho de Gibraltar, pero también por donde irrumpe el norte y se escabulle (o lo intenta) el sur. Vale la imagen para los vientos, y a lo largo de la Historia, hasta el momento presente, también ha valido para los espíritus.” (Cerezales 2004:11)

“All of Morocco, or in Arab MAGHRIB-AL-AQSA (“west end”) because of its location in this northwest edge of the African continent, peeked at the same time to the Atlantic and to the Mediterranean, facing Europe, could be encapsulated in this metaphor. It is the door of all winds, by which the west enters and the east leaves alternating in the Gibraltar Strait, but also by the same place the north bursts or the south sneaks out (or at least tries). This image is valid for the winds, and all along History, until now, it was also valid for the spirits.” (Translation by the author)

In the prologue, the “nets” were mentioned as a symbolic image of fishing since this constitutes an ancestral activity practiced in this region. The nets as an element to gather that what the sea harbors, and in this way to feed the people, would have a parallel with the literary activity that was “stored or harbored” in the narrative.

“Corren tiempos en que se tienden redes para comunicar a las gentes y, a la vez, redes para impedir que las gentes pasen. Uno tiene la impresión de que las segundas funcionan mejor que las primeras.” (Cerezales 2004:11)

“In this time when we cast nets to communicate with the people, and at the same time, nets to prevent the free access to the people. We have the impression that the second work better than the first ones.” (Translation by the author)

A new metaphor is associated with this physical net that becomes literary and now becomes political as a symbol of this great phenomenon of globalization: migration, this human flow that circulates around the world searching for a better life. In the description inserted in the prologue it is noted very clearly the dangers of the “crossing” or navigation and it is also mentioned the obstacles, that going beyond the climatic conditions, reside in the iron will to stop the human circulation. It is worthy of noting that the wind circulation is presented in freedom blowing through open doors. The spirits that converge in the literary act also circulate freely, but when the text refers to the circulation of individuals, such circulation is tenaciously obstructed with apparent success.

These contrasting images would seem to suggest that the natural spaces as well as the transcultural and transliterary spaces would be heralds of a migrant circulation that would have to follow the same patterns since the human being is the main character of this global reality, nonetheless their own structures do not allow their free circulation. No doubt that this compilation of narratives is anchored in the problematic of the XXI century when travelling between



spaces could become challenging. At this point, the networks are introduced again in a new metaphor that brings a hint of hope: the communication networks.

“Cuesta que las redes de comunicación, por muy sofisticadas que sean, propicien el diálogo profundo entre quienes son diferentes; ya sea por lengua, por cultura o por realidad socioeconómica.” (Cerezales 2004:11)

“It is difficult that the networks of communication, even if they are very sophisticated, would promote a deep dialogue between those that are different; being that they speak different languages, belong to distinctive cultures or due to a diverse socio-economic reality.”

(Translation by the author)

The transliteration carries not only a shared message but it also constitutes an example for other exchanges where those hospitable spaces could take place between people, that even keeping their differences of culture, all inhabit the Mediterranean Sea. The key of this enterprise is deposited in the dialogue where all that share the will to accept “the other” meet.

The stories narrated in this compilation as well as the individuals that venture to cross the sea are incited by their dreams.

“Pero el viento de su literatura (que trae enredados los sueños, la memoria y el afán de sus espíritus) sí puede colarse, y acaso contribuir a que los lectores de este lado se tomen la molestia de concebir, como una posibilidad halagüeña, un futuro en el que la red que nos separa caiga, inservible, a los pies de una red más fuerte que nos una. Un tejido de emociones compartidas y de humanidad que, sin hacernos iguales, consiga que nos veamos, nos escuchemos, nos entendamos y dejemos de sernos extraños.” (Cerezales 2004:11)

“But the wind of their literature (that brings entangled their dreams, their memories and the eagerness of their spirit) can infiltrate and maybe contribute that the readership of this side could take the trouble to conceive, as an auspicious possibility a future when the net that separates us will fall, useless, to the feet of a net stronger that will unite us. A weave of shared emotions and humanity that without making us equals, allow that we see each other, that we listen to each other, that we will understand each other and stop being strangers to each other.”

(Translation by the author)

The last net mentioned is the net of human warmth that brings people closer, thus sheltering all other encounters under this unifying aspect that resides in the shared humanity. It would seem that even if it would be easier to distance ourselves rather than become closer, literature keeps on offering us the spaces where stories are told and listened so that also keeps on bringing “the other” closer and thus, allowing for a moment, to listen and understand each other, so that we can meet “the other” that brings inside a treasure, the treasure of “otherness,” that keeps on attracting us because it has our name, our same nature and it is there where “the other” stops being a stranger and we see him or her, as an extension of “the self” and we realize that we needed “the other” in order to complete “the self.”

The title of the story *Amé...Rick* introduces a verb followed by a noun that functions as a direct object pronoun. The explicit subject “I” hides in an action that is the most human action



of all: to love. It is this verb that is responsible of all the most positive nexus that, one way or another, are established between human beings. Nonetheless the verb is conjugated in the past tense indicating that love is nonexistent in the present, it stopped sometime in the past. The essence of this love is a play of words associating the names Rick and Amé...rica. This play of words would insinuate the presence of the American culture through a lonely character that in a way would play the role as a cultural referent that is now part of a literary story but was originated in a cinematographic production that joined three cultures, the Moroccan, the French and the American, in the past. It also merges two artistic productions and two historical times. *Casablanca* represents in the film a place where the characters, fleeing war, converge in a place where they can seek a new route towards the reconstruction of their future. This future freedom seems to resist the access of new participants, as some kind of validation is needed and the competition to gain access to freedom is not only arduous but it is also marked by the deterioration of morals inherited from the war atmosphere of the time.

In the film *Casablanca*, Rick is the jaded, lonely protagonist that lives by his iron-willed, active protection of his personal and political freedom. Paris is a flashback from his past when he was in love with Ilsa. She had left Rick when her husband returned from war after being considered dead for a while. Laszlo, a Czech nationalist, and political idealist imprinted into the private love story of Rick and Ilsa, a political engagement that also called for a personal engagement of Ilsa in the moral decision to stay by her husband. The concept of sacrifice is then incorporated into the love story as the characters navigate the post-war era contrasting the innocent pathway of love and romance from the war time when they hold political engagements from an idealistic point of view, hoping to create a new society based on more stable foundations of justice and freedom for all. Rick's mysterious past prevents him from going back "home" so he decided to self-sacrifice becoming a committed, self-sacrificing idealist contrasting his first war portrait as an innocent character and the later post-war cynical character. "Living against the current" generates in Rick a cynicism that replaces any manifestation of "love." The whole story of *Casablanca* is then encapsulated in *Amé...Rick* in the essence of the cynicism of the protagonist that corresponds to the feelings that the author will use to convey his perception of the film and the global world of the XXI century.

The narrative is subdivided into subtitled sections, which constitute a peculiar narrative structure, while it evokes the film composition of different shots that by their sequential composition becomes a production. The use of different segments in each section of the narrative relates to the complex transliterary and transcultural space that the story will navigate, Morocco, America, and France. The author feels the need to guide the reader as the narrative "crosses several borders" in order to conduct a migratory trajectory that connotes danger and uncharted territories.

The first subdivision of the narrative is described in English and in Spanish "Travelling subjetivo" (Cerezales 2004:58) The story starts with a trip that is taking place simultaneously to the literary narrative reflecting the filming immediacy of the action as it is watched by the public. The travelling action that is described using the English term is qualified by the adjective *subjetivo* i.e., a journey taking place in the emotional and perceptive landscape of the intimate life of the protagonists. The trope of the travel is a metaliterary theme that participates not only in the narrative of the story but also in the collective Historical developments weaved in both the film



and the narrative in parallel, while at the same time points to the journey of the literature that being originated in the Moroccan space is written in Spanish indicating that “the relationship most intimate and absolute of a writer is the language that he chooses for writing his story” “*la filiación más rotunda e íntima de un escritor es el idioma en que escribe,*” (Cerezales 2004:13). This literary story connects with other cultural and social histories that intercepted the Moroccan History at different times.

This narrative is anchored at the intersection and convergence of multiple voices and cultural and historical characters that the Moroccan memory evokes. It is in this frame that this literary journey begins conjuring adventure and the local flavor, movement and that which is permanent. Danger, risk, and adventure belong to “the other” that came to the place “belonging to the self.” The perspective of the story over the fascination with the adventure is presented from the local point of view that witnesses the arrival of the “exoticism” and live it as a sort of adventure to see what belongs to the “self” in the hands of the “stranger” and rediscovers it with a new vision of it. The retrospective vision of the exchange in a national space that becomes a transcultural space as it incorporates itself to the “space of the other” merging into this new space anachronic references coming from a present time that evaluates and analyzes the transcultural experience that his memory provides because it has been preserved in intercultural spaces like the cinematographic space. The travel, like the transcultural space, opens up an opportunity for personal growth through cultural exchanges that materializes in the contact with “the other.” In this story there are parallels to the biblical narrative of the story of the Good Samaritan. It seems that the narrator searched in each of the characters of the adventures a redeemable character that through his or her actions would show consideration for the well being of “the other” rather than taking advantage of “the other.” It seems that the “Good Samaritan” does not show up, instead a series of characters take advantage of the local character to satisfy a selfish intention.

“Ni que decir tiene, Rick, que lo nuestro es un incesante fluir de incurables desencantos e incontenibles efusiones.” (Cerezales 2004:58)

“No need to say, Rick, that ours is an incessant flow of incurable disenchantments and effusions.”  
(Translation by the author)

The image of “incurable disenchantments” paints the story with pessimism that echoes the results of the successive stories and collective histories that repeat themselves in an “incessant flow” of contradictory results and frustrations that consolidate in each encounter with “the other.” *Amé... Rick* using the pessimistic tone, aims to foster a reflection in the reader, that having responded to the invitation to participate in the transliterary event, could participate in a positive way as the narrator alerts him of previous meeting that ended up with frustrating results. The image of the “incessant flow” testifies of the frequency throughout the history of transcultural encounters whose protagonists reject to accept any more disenchantment while searching to achieve positive outcomes for both parties. *Casablanca* and *Amé... Rick* present different cultural characters, different times, different interests, all of them pointing to establish once and for all a real productive exchange for both parties. It is ironic that that while in reality many of the transcultural encounters fail, once they are extrapolated to the literary narrative, they point to building a positive outcome since the story promotes a transliterary encounter and



exchange that could balance the political and cultural negative exchange in the story.

As the narrative continues, the author counterposes a romanticized vision of this encounter of cultures that Hollywood had previously chosen to imprint in the celluloid, to the vision that the Moroccan author imprinted, this time, in a literary narrative. In order to establish the contrast, the author uses the image of his own cowardice as he presents the reality as it was lived by his own people in contrast with the image of a brave and gallant Hollywood enacted by the actors that follow a triumphalist screenplay that supposedly represents the hosting Moroccan culture. The author denounces an industry that is preoccupied with the artistic productions as commercial products more than cultural representations of “the other” that becomes just another actor or even an extra that identifies and shows an elaborated image of the hosting culture of the film, in a sort of “cultural conquest.” In the midst of this inequality, the “incurable disenchantments and effusions” prevail and are bound to multiply.

The writer juxtaposes the time when *Casablanca* was filmed with the contemporary times of the writing of the story introducing himself as the protagonist and commentator of a personal reflection that illustrates a more general Moroccan reflection shared by many others that feel disappointed, and in this disenchantment that develops in the transcultural space, another group is evoked: the Afro-American community that has also been misrepresented in the American cinema for a long time. This transcultural space allows the juxtaposition of times convoking Historical characters in order to establish parallels that are essential for building up a dialogical aspect within the narrative. The transcultural dialogue becomes as dangerous as the journey between cultural Histories given the fact that the “silenced desires to throw in your face a few truths” “...silenciados deseos de echarte en cara unas cuantas verdades” (Cerezales 2004:59) find finally a proper forum where to be expressed.

The accusation of having excluded “the other” in the first encounter of the two cultures (*Casablanca*) that was structured around the framework of a filmic “assimilation” of the other, becomes a recurring theme that is introduced as unrepeatable since it became inadmissible in the transliterary space that hosts all participants as equals. This space allows the introduction of a new approach in new terms heralding a positive message as a consequence of the many other previous encounters that were based in inequality. The auto-identification as *negrito*, using the diminutive, represents the character in a historical role given the fact that his voice in the literary narrative introduces him in a strong voice, very well articulated that is prepared to defend his existence and essence in contrast with the Historical silence when dialogues were non-existent and their representation in the film industry chose to follow this image by introducing them as characters with limited voice and ample silences.

The second section of the narrative has the subtitle of “Travelling panorámico.” Once again the

“(este negrito)... Pregunta por qué no había cabida para los autóctonos en tu universo, y por qué, cuando la cámara se dignaba a enfocarlos, sólo lo hacía para insinuar que sus dignatarios son corruptos y estafadores todos sus comerciantes. En suma, solidario Rick, por qué sólo fuimos, incluso en nuestro Casablanca, alborotados

“(my ‘negrito’)...besieges me with questions about the horrible conditions of the Agarenos in your time and world. He questions why there was no place for the natives in your universe, and why, when the camera deigned to focus on them, it only did so to imply that their dignitaries are corrupt and swindlers to all of their mer-



zocos, indescodificables algarabías, vergonzosa exhibición de mansurriones rebaños, laberínticos bazares de tapices y alfombras, indecente exposición de siluetas enturbantadas, desahuciados adictos al regateo folclórico y prosélitos incondicionales del disfraz.. por qué siempre immortalizados en planos lejanos; por qué eternos inquilinos de la profundidad del campo, meros accesorios de ambientación, exóticos elementos de figuración en el reparto y superfluos efectos especiales puestos al servicio de tu historia.” (Cerezales 2004:59)

chants. In sum, solidary Rick, because we only went, even in our *Casablanca*, rowdy souks, indescribable Arabic expressions, shameful exhibition of exceedingly tamed flocks, bizarre mazes of carpets and rugs, indecent exposure of muddy silhouettes, far gone addicts to the folkloric bargaining and unconditional proselytes of disguise... why are they always immortalized in distant planes; why are they the eternal tenants of the background plane, mere accessories, exotic elements of representation in the cast of actors, and superfluous special effects at the service of your plot.” (Translation by the author)

use of two languages juxtaposed could insinuate a dialogue of cultures when each one chooses to express itself in its own language. Native and foreign languages cease to occupy the assigned national spaces to become in the transnational world a choice offered to each interlocutor in order to construct out of them a personal message. The proximity in the rendition of the word *panoramic* in English and *panorámico* in Spanish establishes a bridge of understanding between the two audiences leaving the word “travelling” as a very accessible term for many other speakers thanks to the cultural mobility of the term in a globalized world. The repetition of the term “travelling” from the first section to the second one fosters the idea of a sequence that is developing an idea from different perspectives thus giving unity and consistence to the story that is presented in what could resemble as chapters. The transition from the subjective to the panoramic is indicative of the determination of the author to speak out of his own reflection without discarding the political environments that somehow seem to point out to more permanent realities rather than temporal and unique Historical events. The juxtaposition of times and Historical characters indicate the change in circumstances while the divisive issues which seem to be presented as permanent remain buried under an invisible layer of unrecognized humanity that is shared by all.

The author in his role of obfuscated *negrito* continues to recriminate Rick. At one time he says:

“... « mais c’est bien sûr »...Tiempos complicados, intemporal Rick, en que se nos escapan hasta nuestros Alter negros. Qué lejos quedan, en la memoria cinética, el abigarrado Marruecos petenista, la Francia no ocupada...” (Cerezales 2004:59)

“...« mais c’est bien sûr »...Complicated times, timeless Rick, in which even our alter negros escape us. How far are they, in the kinetic memory, the variegated Moroccan Pétainist, the unoccupied France...” (Translation by the author)

The historical political discourse is imprinted in the languages of the transliterary space as French is incorporated into it. It seemed appropriate for the transcultural space to host the French History and language simultaneously as the voice of the “other” should show some



authenticity and identity respecting the political and cultural frameworks of the transcultural space that does not delete the individual identities but rather hosts them, giving each participant not only a space, but also the freedom of expression and the right to participate in the dialogue that keeps on inviting rather than restricting. The main character Rick is timeless so it seems to be out of place in a discussion when time in its chronological line is discussed. The accusation seems to be directed to the anachronistic insertion of a character that in order to be placed outside of time, he should have had to conquer that place “above” History and not just be assigned to him. A characteristic that normally elevates people or events above History seems to diminish Rick due to a lack of effectiveness. In a certain way, Rick becomes less than the Moroccan extras that were “placed” in *Casablanca* as objects rather than subjects or characters. The line of time becomes blurry and the historical events are represented instead of by the events of war rather by the events that had repercussions in the lives of the citizens that were forced to navigate structures within a local and an international cultural and political unstable circumstances amidst the acceleration of time that somehow leaves Rick outside of the regular negotiations of personal freedom. It seems that Rick stays jailed in himself and time expels him from History while the cinematographic world saves him by placing him in the timeless world of art. He is condemned to be observed or admired or hated with no agency in the literary discussion of the next century. The author indicates that History and the reality imprinted in the cinema create confusion. As time goes by it seems that both enter in competition and films are endowed with a more robust sense of reality than History records convey.

“Qué lejos, inolvidable Rick, pero qué cerca también. Qué cerca porque Casablanca, como si permaneciera fuera del tiempo, luce todavía su reputación de lugar de tránsito, y aunque los candidatos al viaje de salvación ya no son los mismos y el documento exigido se llama hoy visado, resulta inevitable conceder que historia y cine a veces coinciden y se confunden.” (Cerezales 2004:59)

“So far, unforgettable Rick, but so close at the same time. So close because Casablanca, as it would stay outside of the realm of time, it displays a reputation of a place of transit, and even though the candidates for the journey or travel towards salvation are no longer the same that required document is now called a visa, it is unavoidable to concede that History and cinema sometimes coincide and they get confused.”  
(Translation by the author)

The author then approaches both times and cultural events by pointing to the shared characteristic that Casablanca in the film and today constitutes a place of transit. In this way, the subtitle “travelling” acquires a new and deeper meaning. It becomes a dialogue of travelers in a globalized world that ceased to see it as divided parcels but rather a place of transit where people seek to find better realities and better places for individual lives rather than a political agenda with more collective connotations or repercussions. The only stable element between both transcultural productions like *Casablanca* and *Amé...Rick* is the fact of being a place of transit and encounters. Each tells a story constructed according to the worldview of the century that produced it. The author also seems to attempt to correct the first partial intercultural event depicted in the film *Casablanca* since an unequal dialogue characterized it, where a more powerful position managed to silence “the other.” The “timeless Rick” becomes the “unfor-



gettable Rick” receiving in this way an iconic recognition of a whole era that were not ready to establish a transcultural exchange in a position of equality. In this way, Rick escapes time, one more time, because it becomes a symbol of a first failed attempt to conciliate in communion the “self” and “the other.” It is unforgettable because the memory is essential to preserve the continuity. It is thanks to the exercise of memory that we can go forward and correct the errors of the past. It is a ray of hope, a message that indicates that we can be better and conquer that which we lost in History.

Many of the transcultural journeys become, in our century, movements of migration. Those that want and choose to emigrate find themselves having to interpret confusing rules of displacement (and the absence of them) setting them in a similar situation as when the cultural empires wanted to present the culture of “the other” from a foreign perspective ending by representing just their own interpretations of it, detached from “the other.” In both cases the journeys of the transnational world present inadequate maps of mobility. In the XXI century, the political responses to the migration of “the other” are not adequate to the political demands of “the other” that expects to be seen and taken into account because he and she hold unmet needs that require intervention. Yesterday’s failed politics demand that at this junction of History new mechanisms of recognition of “the other” be established by mutual accord, in cooperation, in order to establish once and for all a true encounter with the other and not one more negation of the other.

The subtitle of the next section is “Fundido encadenado” or “molten chained.” This subtitle reflects the terrible image of lack of mobility and freedom that seems to evade all attempts to be broken. During this segment of the story Rick is absent. Later on Rick will become “seditious Rick” or “sedicioso Rick.” The announced disenchantment of the beginning of the narrative is deployed in this section. The “richness of the soul” or “Riqueza de alma” transforms into “fictitious Rick” or “ficticio Rick.” The encounter ends up being a mismatch leaving both parties in a vacuum of broken promises and expectations of the negation of “the other” that feels minimized and unprotected under the auspices of a political solution that ends up being not favorable at all to “the other.”

The next segment of the narrative is subtitled “Crossing on dry land” or “Paso en seco.” In this section Rick becomes “vanished Rick” or “esfumado Rick” indicating a magic or unexpected absence. The individualistic character representative of the American culture is replaced by the Cultural Empire that is going to nourish “the other” with the American cultural production by showing up in the culture of “the other” where “this other” is no longer there. The political ideals were translated to these cultures without taking into account the cultural traditions and local ways of life. This imposition is presented in a beneficial or salutary tone as the framework of the new structure of exchange that will end up not prospering because “the other” simply is not present because nobody bothered to invite him or her to this encounter. “The other” was simply asked to acquiesce to the demands presented under the pretense of seeking “the other’s” wellbeing. In this way, the “negrito” narrator describes Rick as “amnesiac Rick” or “Amnésico Rick” since he insists on repeating the same errors of the past.

“Inútil recordarte, amnésico Rick, que tu errada intuición sobre “el principio de una hermosa amistad” entre los hombres, léase

“It is useless to remember you, amnesiac Rick, that your erroneous intuition about “the beginning of a wonderful friend-



entre franceses y americanos, no sobrevive a la agonía de las Naciones Hundidas. Walker y Lawrence retoman sus alforjas y reinciden, y, enlazados como nunca en santa alianza, se dan cita en el Bagdad Café, con Sancho, profanador de la orden de caballería, al acecho de una miserable propina. (...)

Cuesta reconocerlo, comprensivo Rick, pero, en un caso como en el otro, embarazoso es convenir que nos encontramos, como siempre, fuera de la pantalla y fuera de la Historia. Fuera de juego, blanco de todos los fuegos.” (Cerezales 2004:62)

ship” between the peoples, read it between French and Americans, does not survive to the agony of the Sunken Nations. Walker and Lawrence get their luggage again and relapse, and, linked up as never before in a Holy Alliance, concert a meeting in the Bagdad Café, with Sancho, profaner of the order of the cavalry, on the prowl of a miserable tip. (...)

It is difficult to acknowledge it, understanding Rick, but in one case as in the other, it is embarrassing to agree that we met, as usual, outside of the screen and outside of History. Outside of the game, as the target of all the fires.”

(Translation by the author)

The subtitle for the next section is “filming sheet” or “hoja de rodaje” which precedes “American shot” and “Panoramic shot” or “Plano americano” and “Plano panorámico” where it is narrated with much disenchantment and pain the incidents of the war and invasion of the territories of the Middle East. The cynic tone that characterizes the narration testifies of the ultimate frustration to witness the repetition of the same errors and the perpetuation of the same transcultural approaches from unilateral points of view. This is the point where the conversations stop to be built as nexus between the two parties becoming a sermon where one party speaks and the other witness the sermon.

The description becomes more and more animated giving free rein to a description of the contempt of “the other.”

“Una horda de lobotomizados, de deplorable condición humana, negros camellos arrepentidos, junkies chicanos reciclados y blanquitauados desesperados con botas, uniforme caquicaca, blindados cascos y auriculares sintonizando radio Good Morning Babilonia, asalta por tierra, mar y aire los antiguos jardines del edén.” (Cerezales 2004:63)

“A horde of lobotomized, of deplorable human condition, black remorseful camels, recycled and white-tattooed junkies Chicanos, desperados in boots, caquicaca uniforms, armored helmets and headphones tuned in to radio Good Morning Babilonia, assaults by land, sea and air the ancient gardens of eden.”

(Translation by the autor)

The following section is subtitled as “Chopped shot” or “Plano picado.” In this portion of the narrative, the author describes the landscape after the American invasion to the Arab territories. The ironic tone characterizes the description of the desolation left after the war contrasting it with its History of splendor.



“Titánicas chimeneas de denso humo, descomunales boquetes de abismal profundidad en las calles liberadas de sus juguetones niños, ciudades redimidas del yugo de sus infraestructuras, subsuelos independizados de la tiránica gestión de sus riquezas por sectores reacios al librecambismo...

“...destripados los museos, inanimados a los sumerios y acadios y sin dignidad a todos los supervivientes.” (Cerezales 2004:63)

“Titanic chimneys of dense smoke, humongous holes of abysmal depth in the streets liberated from their own playful children, cities redeemed from the yoke of their own infrastructures, subsoil, underground freed from the titanic management of their richness by sectors contrary to the free trade...”

“... gutted museums, inanimate to the Sumerians and Acadians and without dignity to all the survivors.”  
(Translations by the autor)

In this description, the author lets loose his resentment feeling that run deep in his soul declaring the unwelcomed presence of “the other” assigning the Americans as the sole perpetrators and culpable of all the events related to the war. These feelings seems to have been brooding and cultivated after many failed attempts to bring together “the self” to “the other.” In the narrative, these strings of failed attempts are blamed on the American side for deepening the distances between the two parties.

The next section is subtitled as “Archival shot” or “Plano de archivo” that culminates with the rhetorical question: “Why did I love you, Rick?” “- Por qué te amé, Rick?” (Cerezales 2004:64) using parody to approach the character of *Casablanca* to the protagonist in the story *Amé... Rick*. The nexus between the two artistic productions is the verb love conjugated in the past tense leaving open a new rendition of this love in the present tense with different results so the ray of hope is hidden in the same verb in a present or future conjugation of it. It is interesting that the author presents in his conclusion the intercultural spaces of the past in a failing state, due to the fact that this space could not guarantee the encounter of the cultures. Nonetheless, the final message is presented in the very short final segment subtitled “Reality shot” or “Plano real” indicating:

“Los del otro lado de la pantalla y de la Historia, repetimos, sin demasiada convicción, siempre nos quedará París.” (Cerezales 2004:64)

“Those on the other side of the screen and of History, we repeat, without too much conviction, we will always have Paris.”  
(Translation by the author)

In this phrase that closes the narrative in the same way that *Casablanca* closes the film the author makes reference to the fact that circumstances and people change but the memories of the good times shared in love will persist. Maybe the answer to the transcultural encounter in the transcultural environment rests not in the place or the circumstances of the gathering but in the heart of each participant that dares to include “the other” not only in the dialogue but in the intimacy of the heart which represents the ultimate human connection between peoples. It is evident that the author indicates that *Casablanca* did not do justice to the presence of “the other” but chose to romanticize the presence of “the other” and presented “this other” within the constraints of a pre-established script written “on his behalf” responding to a unilateral



vision of the culture of “the other” relegating “this other” to silence in a distorted mirror. The final sentence seems to echo once again, this time in the literary narrative of the transliterary world of the XXI century, heralding a new opportunity to concert an encounter to meet again as equals in the connection of love. This definition escapes the romantic scene deepening the transcendence and meaning of the necessary bond between the peoples, the true meaning of love in sacrifice and passion that keeps on being supremely costly for the ultimate reward for “the self”; to have access to the privilege to be in the presence of “the other.”

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# Identität durch Architektur im Kontext türkischer Remigration

## Über »Migrating Spaces«, ein Kunst- und Forschungsprojekt

Stefanie Bürkle

- Abstract** Migration is a painful and yet creative experience. This is inquired in the project »Migrating Spaces« (2013-2016) at the example of the houses of German-Turkish builder-owners. It departs from the assumption that the relationship of re-migrants and their buildings without architects is mirrored in the relationship of identity and architecture. This article differentiates the emergence of non-pedigreed respectively anonymous architecture and distinguishes three types of houses: model house, two-faced house, and multi-layer house. Many of them have been realised in cooperatives and as kind of gated communities in Turkey along the Mediterranean coast. The visual fieldwork into the present topic is seen as a procedure of artistic research.
- Keywords** Turkey, remigration, vernacular architecture, visual fieldwork, artistic research
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.9



Aus persönlicher Erfahrung beschreibt der Philosoph und Vordenker des digitalen Zeitalters Vilém Flusser Migration als eine kreative und gleichwohl schmerzhaft Situation. Wer die Heimat verlässt, leidet, weil die tausend Fäden, die die Migranten mit der Heimat verbinden, wie bei einem chirurgischen Eingriff durchschnitten werden. Kreativität entsteht in diesem Raum des Verlusts, der auch Freiheit bedeutet, weil sich der Mensch mit einer solchen unvorhersehbaren und unerklärlichen Bewegung gegen seine Lebensbedingungen empören und sie damit verändern kann (Flusser 2007, 10). Mit der Remigration, werden die zuvor durchschnittenen Fäden nicht einfach dort und zu dem Zeitpunkt weitergesponnen, wo und an dem sie getrennt wurden, sie müssen zu einem neuen Gewebe vernetzt werden. Dabei greift der Migrant auf die wohlgefügt Netze und Strukturen der ihn umgebenden Gesellschaften zurück. Neue Fäden müssen jedoch eingewoben und alte Fäden zusammengeknotet werden – bis zum erneuten, »doppelten Vergessen [...] des ursprünglichen Kulturerlebnisses und der Kulturerkenntnis im Augenblick der Ankunft« (Flusser 1999, 77). Dies muss keinen Bruch bedeuten, im Wechselspiel der erfahrenen kulturellen Vorstellungen und der realen Situation kann Neues entstehen, auch eine Kultursynthese. Flusser als »ständiger Migrant«, wie er sich selbst sah, konnte aus diesem Zustand, ähnlich wie andere Künstler und Intellektuelle, die sich ebenfalls meist als »fremd und anders« innerhalb ihrer Umgebung empfinden, die Quelle für sein Schaffen machen und das Leiden an der Erfahrung von Migration produktiv in Form von Werken bewältigen. Für ihn stärkte die gewonnene Freiheit durch Migration seine kreative Leistung. Auch die türkischen Arbeitsmigranten haben eine bestimmte »Freiheit« durch Migration gewonnen – trotz der Erfahrung von wirtschaftlicher Not und Fremdsein, von Widerständen und Vorurteilen. Die Kreativität in ihrer Lebensleistung drückt sich im gebauten Haus oder in der gestalteten Wohnung als »Werk« ihrer Lebensleistung aus.

Genau diese Häuser deutsch-türkischer Bauherren in der Türkei stehen im Fokus des Kunstprojektes »Migrating Spaces« (2013-2016). Mit einem interdisziplinären Team von Künstlerinnen und Wissenschaftlerinnen untersuchte ich die gestalterischen und räumlichen Merkmale der von Rückkehrern oder Pendelmigranten in der Türkei gebauten Häuser.

In verschiedenen Regionen der Türkei wurden türkische Haus- und Wohnungsbesitzer befragt, die in Deutschland gelebt und gearbeitet haben. Das häusliche Umfeld wurde mit künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Methoden bezüglich der räumlichen Organisation und symbolischen Repräsentation analysiert. Insgesamt wurden 132 Rückkehrerhäuser beziehungsweise -wohnungen mittels Foto- und Videoaufnahmen künstlerisch dokumentiert. Mit 37 Immobilienbesitzern wurden qualitative, leitfadengestützte Interviews durchgeführt.

Dabei war es wichtig, Migration nicht im Sinne eines bipolaren Konfliktes zwischen einer Herkunftskultur und einer Aufnahmekultur, sondern im Sinne eines Kommunikationsprozesses zu begreifen. Annäherung an Fremdes und Abweisung von Fremdem geschieht immer in einem wechselseitigen Austauschprozess, der auch die Migration von Räumen prägt. Durch die raumübergreifende Verortungspraxis der Migranten entstehen »Zwischen-Räume«, im Sinne von »Transtopien« (Yildiz 2013, 36).

Räume wiederum konstituieren sich durch die relativen Anordnungen von Körpern, die in Bewegung sind (Löw 2001). Die Bewegung der Remigration stellt nicht die Gegenbewegung der Migration dar, sondern eine eigenständige Dynamik von Körpern, Räumen und deren Vorstellungen, die jeden Ort auf einen anderen beziehen. Indem wir diese Bezogenheit



berücksichtigen, können die transnationalen Pionierleistungen der Migranten nun als translokale Bewegungen verstanden werden. Die Fernräume Herkunftskultur und Aufnahmekultur stehen nicht mehr den Nahräumen Dorfgemeinschaft in der Türkei und Familie im Kiez der Städte in Deutschland gegenüber, sondern Lokales und Nicht-Lokales verkoppeln sich, obwohl sie unterschiedliche Bezüge haben.

### Migration von Räumen

Setzt man den Raum in Bezug zu gesellschaftlichen Prozessen – also zur Migration –, kann man von einer »Migration von Räumen« sprechen. Der Raumbildungsprozess selbst wird dann lesbar als eine gestalterische Transformation und Translation von Raumbildern aus Herkunfts- und Aufnahmeland. In einem Prozess der Selbstklassifikation (vgl. Bourdieu 1982) werden von den Remigranten Raumvorstellungen integriert und migriert. »Identität markiert die Grenzen zwischen Eigenem und Fremdem« (Bauhardt 2004, 93). Nicht nur Menschen, sondern auch Räume und Bilder wandern (Bürkle 2009, 48). Um den wechselseitigen Einfluss der beiden Kategorien zu betrachten, bezieht sich die Untersuchung auf den relationalen Raumbegriff der Geografie und Soziologie (Löw 2001, Massey 2005, Werlen 1997). Raum konstituiert sich demnach in der Verbindung physisch-materieller Gegebenheiten und sozialer Handlungen. So ist für den Soziologen und Philosophen de Certeau (1988, 218) der Raum ein Ort, mit dem man etwas macht. Die geometrisch festgelegte Straße wird erst durch die Gehenden in einen Raum verwandelt. In ähnlicher Weise beschreibt Löw den Raum »als relationale (An)Ordnung von Körpern, welche unaufhörlich in Bewegung sind, wodurch sich die (An)Ordnungen selbst ständig verändern« (Löw 2001, 131).

Dieser Blickwinkel ermöglicht es, die materiellen Eigenschaften der Orte in ein Verhältnis zu den Möglichkeiten der Nutzung und Vereinnahmung zu setzen. Menschen identifizieren sich in dem Maße mit der Umwelt, wie sie die Entwicklung der eigenen Person, der eigenen Identität fördert (Proshansky 1978). In der Gruppe der Remigranten formen baulich-gestalterische Faktoren auf Grundlage räumlich-ästhetischer Erfahrungen im Herkunfts- und Aufnahmeland die Identifikation mit der Umwelt. Es wäre verfehlt, von nationalen Identitäten sprechen oder eine Identität im Verhältnis zur Herkunfts- und Aufnahmekultur festlegen zu wollen. Nationalstaatliche Grenzen sind nicht mit kulturellen Grenzen deckungsgleich. Die lokale Lebenssituation der Migranten im Herkunftsland und die Lebenswirklichkeit im Aufnahmeland scheinen einen relevanteren Einfluss zu haben als ein generalisierendes Kulturverständnis auf der Makroebene (Heckmann 1992). Andererseits erfordert das Projekt ein Verständnis der gesellschaftlichen und ökonomischen Verbindungen von Herkunfts- und Aufnahmeland der Migranten. Hier setzt die Transnationalismusdebatte an: Dabei werden die Zugehörigkeiten der Migranten nicht mehr in Abhängigkeit eines national gefassten Gesellschaftsbegriffes gefasst. Vielmehr wird Rückkehr- beziehungsweise Pendelmigration als Teil eines zirkulären Systems sozialer und wirtschaftlicher Beziehungen jenseits nationalstaatlicher Grenzen erklärt. Das Projekt folgt der Transnationalismusforschung in seiner Prämisse, dass Transmigration durch den Bezugsrahmen der beiden Nationalstaaten – Türkei und Deutschland – geprägt ist. So bilden die physischen und gesellschaftlichen Lebensräume der Migranten nicht nur eine Extension der Herkunftsgemeinden, sondern formen eine eigene Lebensweise (Pries 2011). Zusätzlich stellt die »kritische Migrationsforschung« (Yildiz & Mattausch 2009) einen theoretischen Ansatz bereit,



der die Flexibilität und die Kontextualität kultureller Identitäten erklärt. Identität wird hier als dynamische Größe verstanden, die situationsspezifisch verhandelt wird (Römhild 2009). Diese Konzeption bietet einen Bezugsrahmen für unser Projekt, da sie erklärt, wie Migranten in verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen, so auch bei der Gestaltung und Nutzung ihres Wohn- und Lebensraums, ihr Verhalten anhand der Rollenerwartungen im jeweiligen Kontext ausrichten (Bommes 2003).

Im Sinne von Giddens (1991) kann Identität also als ein dynamisches Geflecht von bewussten und unbewussten Verhaltensweisen und ebenso als eine Reflexion darüber in einem sozialen Umfeld verstanden werden. Das soziale Umfeld ist einerseits lokal verortbar, eben durch Migrations- und Remigrationserfahrungen. Andererseits wirkt eine erweiterte, mediatisierte Umwelt, die sich global vernetzt. Angesichts der großen Mobilität infolge der Globalisierung und extremen Beschleunigung von Kommunikation aufgrund digitaler Vernetzung im virtuellen Raum, gewinnt der greifbare »reale« Raum wieder zunehmend an Bedeutung – zum einen als ein Refugium des Individuums für seine Selbstverortung und zum anderen als städtischer Raum zur Identifizierung mit Gesellschaft und Stadt, selbst wenn »mit Hilfe der Internetmedien soziale Räume unabhängig vom physischen Raum entstehen« (Stegbauer 2002, 344). So können »Entortung« und »Verortung« als zwei ineinander verschränkte Bewegungen verstanden werden, die nicht etwa gegenläufig sind. Vielmehr bedingen sie sich gegenseitig, da der als Verlust des physischen Raums erlebte Prozess neue Raumbezüge schafft (Stegbauer 2002), die jenseits des realen Herkunftsortes soziale Örtlichkeiten herstellen. Auch im Sinne partikularer Sicherheit scheint Raum als Immobilie im konkreten Austausch von Geld gegen Raum angesichts globaler Finanzkrisen mehr denn je vom Spekulationsobjekt zum Garant für die eigene Existenz zu werden (Bürkle 2013, 40).

## Identität durch Architektur

Die Verbindung von Identität und Architektur spiegelt die Beziehung zwischen dem Remigranten als Bauherren und dem Gebäude als Werk wider. Dies gilt vor allem dann, wenn das Bauwerk nicht das Resultat eines strukturierten Gestaltungsprozesses im Sinne einer Repräsentation von Architektur als Landmark ist, als corporate architecture oder auch als historische Rekonstruktion, denn dann soll Architektur eine über das Bauwerk hinausreichende Repräsentationsfunktion erfüllen. Das Werk steht hierbei im Mittelpunkt, in dem es als Zeichen über sich selbst hinausweist. Der Raum als Körper entfernt sich damit von der Subjektverfassung des Menschen (Schoper 2010, 19). Schoper bezeichnet es als eine Identität von Architektur, wenn das Bauwerk als Ergebnis eines Schaffensprozesses zum Werk wird und auf wesensfremde Attribute verweist,

»Die konkrete ‚Identität von Architektur‘ ist dabei jeweils zu betrachten als Resultat Ihrer Varianz vom ‚Identischen‘. [...] Architektur der Selbstheit könnte demnach bedeuten, dass das Werk selbst im Mittelpunkt steht, nicht der Gestalter; Gestaltung als Prozess würde unsichtbar, sie ginge im Werk auf.« (Schoper 2010, 30)

Als das Identische kann die Sphäre der Anwesenheit einer gemeinsamen Wirklichkeit des Wahrnehmenden und des Wahrgenommenen im Sinne Gernot Böhmes verstanden werden



(Böhme 1995, 36). Schoper spricht von der Beziehung zwischen Begriff, Ding und Bild.

In diesem philosophisch-ästhetischen Verständnis wäre das Bauwerk als künstlerisches Werk zu begreifen und zu beschreiben. Bei der Migration von Räumen entstehen die Räume der Remigranten in einem langwierigen und von wechselhaften Rahmenbedingungen geprägten Prozess, in dem die Gestaltung zunächst hinter die funktionalen Aufgaben zurücktritt. Das Material, das Dingliche, steht im Vordergrund. Die Materialität jedoch steht nicht jenseits des Sozialen, sondern wird von den Menschen innerhalb ihres tradierten Systems von Sinn- und Bildgebungen wahrgenommen (Löw 2009, 353). Das heißt, es werden Bild- oder Raumvorstellungen umgesetzt, wobei ein bauliches Element aus dem Aufnahmeland am Gebäude im Herkunftsland seinen Platz finden kann. So wird das Bauwerk in das städtebauliche Umfeld, die Sprache, integriert oder davon abgehoben. Hier ist also von einer Architektur die Rede, die nicht selbst Sprache sein will, sondern lokale, regionale und ethnische Dialekte spricht (Oliver 2006, 17). Identität durch Architektur bezieht sich unserer Auffassung nach auf ein umfassenderes Selbstverständnis von Architektur, das sich nicht auf einzelne Werkbeschreibungen reduzieren lässt:

»Architecture is a socio-environmental art form rather than a fine art – its criticality is at once aesthetic, environmental and social. The renunciation of the fixation on form, however, needs to be tempered by a critical engagement with the role of built form and place identity in practices of power.« (Dovey 2013, 88)

In diesem erweiterten sozialen Verständnis einer Identität durch Architektur kann von einer wechselseitigen Beeinflussung ausgegangen werden. Die soziale Identität des Bauherrn als Gestalter findet ihren Ausdruck in dem Bauwerk und im Gegenzug bestimmt das Bauwerk die Identität des Bauherrn mit. Identität ist dabei nicht ausschließlich als eine kulturell oder ökonomisch determinierte Sollgröße zu verstehen, mit der Absicht in einer bewusst definierten Form ein soziales Umfeld zu beeindrucken, sondern als eine auf Erfahrungen in sozialen Situationen beruhende Selbstdefinition (Berger et al. 1973, 69).

In der Untersuchung zu den Raumvorstellungen und Bauwerken von türkischen Remigranten werden unterschiedliche soziale und räumliche Erfahrungen sichtbar, die beispielsweise aus einer Zeit vor dem Verlassen des Herkunftslandes stammen oder sich auf Ankommen und Leben im Aufnahmeland oder Besuche im Herkunftsland zurückführen lassen. Die Erfahrungen in unterschiedlichen sozialen und räumlichen Welten sind einem fortwährenden Wandel ausgesetzt. Sie beeinflussen in unterschiedlichem Ausmaß die Vorstellungen von der Gestalt des Hauses, das als Lebensmittelpunkt ein »subjektives Reich der Identität [als] hauptsächliche[r] Halt des Individuums in der Wirklichkeit« (Berger et al. 1973, 73) bildet. Als umbauter Raum bildet das Haus somit die materielle Grenze zwischen den sich wandelnden Lebenswelten und dem eigenen Selbstverständnis. Beide Raumvorstellungen beeinflussen sich wechselseitig.

### **Anonyme Architektur oder Individualisierte Gehäuse**

Zunächst sind die Häuser der Remigranten Architektur ohne Architekten. Ein Auswahlkriterium bei der Suche nach Gesprächspartnern war die fehlende professionelle Expertise für den Bau von Häusern, denn es sollte nicht die Architektur von remigrierten Architekten, sondern



von Remigranten selbst entworfene oder sogar selbst gebaute Häuser untersucht werden. Keiner der Gesprächspartner ist daher ein Experte, keiner ist Architekt, Gestalter oder Bauingenieur. Es kann also von einer Architektur ohne Architekt gesprochen werden: »Architecture Without Architects [Hervorhebung im Original] attempts to break down our narrow concepts of the art of building by introducing the unfamiliar world of non-pedigreed architecture.« (Rudofsky 1964, 1). Man könnte auch von vernakulärer Architektur sprechen. »Vernacular« steht dabei weniger für eine allgemeine kulturelle Identität, sondern für einen zeitgenössischen Begriff der Verortung, um das Wechselverhältnis von Identität und Architektur genauer zu beschreiben. Das Fehlen eines professionellen, also auch intentionalen Gestaltungskonzepts lässt die Architektur »lesbar« werden, da unterschiedliche Rollenbilder und Raumvorstellungen in Umbauten ihren bewussten und unbewussten Ausdruck finden und nicht allein eine repräsentative Funktion, oder wie es Glassie ausdrückt, »We call buildings ‚vernacular‘ because they embody values alien to those cherished in the academy» (Glassie 2000, 20). Die Beschreibung einer *vernacular architecture* erlaubt die Analyse der Bedeutung von äußerer Gestalt und innerer Form, um daraus Aussagen über die Identität des Bauherrn als denjenigen, der sie entwirft, und seiner Beziehung zum sozialen Umfeld abzuleiten. Dabei spielen die offensichtlichen Funktionen und Raumzuweisungen weniger eine Rolle als Bilder und Vorstellungen (Rapoport 1977, 60). In Anlehnung an Rapoport's Verständnis, dass Architektur als Ausdruck kultureller Identität in einem Wechselverhältnis zwischen Ausdruck und Eindruck von Kultur und Architektur steht, kann bei den Bauwerken von Remigranten von einer Wechselbeziehung zwischen (Migrations-) Biografie und umbautem Raum ausgegangen werden, die lesbar ist.

Im deutschen Sprachgebrauch hat sich – aus naheliegenden, hier nicht weiter ausgeführten Gründen – für Radofskys Begriff der *vernacular architecture* nicht die wortwörtliche Übersetzung »einheimische Architektur« im Gegensatz zur »reinrassigen Architektur« von Architekten, der *pedigreed architecture*, durchgesetzt. Stattdessen wird von einer »Anonymen Architektur« gesprochen, wenn von Architektur ohne Architekten die Rede ist. Hier wird im Sprachgebrauch das Werkhafte, also das Für-mich der Repräsentation (Schoper 2010) betont. In diesem Sinne kann ein Nicht-Architekt auch kein Werk im Sinne eines über sich selbst hinausweisenden Zeichens schaffen, sondern lediglich ein Bauwerk oder wie es Julius Posener nennt: ein Gehäuse.

»Anonyme Architektur, also Architektur ohne Architekten, finden wir aus zwei Gründen interessant. Einmal haben die Erbauer der Bauernhäuser aller Zeiten und Zonen und auch der städtischen Häuser, soweit sie nicht zu repräsentieren brauchten, ohne Bindung an den Formenapparat arbeiten dürfen, der für die hohe Kunst der Architektur geschaffen wurde. Dabei sind ihnen Hausgestalten gelungen, die kein Architekt zu entwerfen gewagt haben würde. Zum anderen sind das Gehäuse, welche einem bestimmten Gebrauch auf's Genaueste dienen.« (Posener 1981, 359)

Diese Gehäuse sind aber eben nicht anonym, sondern im höchsten Maße persönlich, individuell und eben sichtbare Gestalt der Identität des Bauherrn.

Durch visuelle Feldforschung konnten wir drei Haupttypen beschreiben und voneinander abgrenzen: Das *Vorbild-Haus*, das sich in Erscheinung und Gestaltung auf ein geschlossenes Bild bezieht, das die Grundlage für eine konkrete Idee zu Beginn des Baus, der meist am



Stück realisiert wird, bildet. Das *Zweiteile-Haus*, das einerseits aus einer deutschen und andererseits aus einer lokal üblichen türkischen Baukultur zu zwei gleichen Teilen, die deutlich sichtbar voneinander getrennt sind, entstanden ist.

Das *Mehrschicht-Haus*, das über viele Jahre, meist in Eigenarbeit und während der Urlaubszeit des Bauherren realisiert wurde und dessen Bauprozess sich in unterschiedlichen Baustilen und deutschen Baumaterialien widerspiegelt.

### Die Rolle des Hausbaus im Kontext der Rückkehr

Sowohl die Wohnsituation (Raumbildung als realisierter Lebensraum) als auch die Wohnwünsche (Raumbilder als projizierter Lebensraum) werden durch Migrationsprozesse beeinflusst.

Ein eigenes Haus zu besitzen ist ein weit verbreiteter Wunsch. Er war es vor allem für die erste Generation damals junger, männlicher Migranten, denen er als zu gebendes Versprechen an die Familie vor der Migration nach Deutschland mitgegeben wurde. Wer in der Türkei Wohneigentum besitzt, wurde als »gemachter Mann« akzeptiert.« (Günes 2007)

Der Aufenthalt eines Arbeitsmigranten in Deutschland in zunächst sehr einfachen Wohnunterkünften ohne Familie verstärkte den Wunsch nach den eigenen vier Wänden. Die im Verhältnis zum Herkunftsland ungewohnten städtebaulichen und sozialräumlichen Kontexte in den industriell geprägten, städtischen Zielorten in Deutschland motivierten im Folgenden, Ersparnis in den Hausbau in der Türkei zu investieren. Mit der Idee von der Rückkehr im Kopf wurden Investitionen in Immobilien in der Türkei getätigt. Oft entsteht in diesem Zusammenhang eine Diskrepanz zwischen der Lebensweise und



Abb. 1: Vorbild-Haus bei Bartın, Schwarzmeerküste

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Abb. 2: Zweiteile-Haus bei Tarsus

©Stefanie Bürkle/VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2013



Abb. 3: Mehrschicht-Haus bei Kayseri

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Wohnqualität in Deutschland und der Türkei: Erwirtschaftetes Geld wird hauptsächlich in Wohneigentum in der Türkei investiert, während der Lebensstandard in Deutschland gleichzeitig niedrig bleibt (Krumme 2004, 138). Die wachsende Bindung der Migranten an Deutschland bedingt jedoch eine Veränderung des Kaufinteresses: Migranten erwerben verstärkt Eigentum in Deutschland (Ücok und Kjeldgaard 2006, 434) und kaufen zunehmend Ferienhäuser in der Türkei.

Oftmals sind diese, früher ausschließlich genossenschaftlich finanzierten, sogenannten »Sitesi« räumlich organisiert wie *gated communities* und gleichen damit strukturell



Abb. 4: Sitesi, türkische Mittelmeerküste bei Side  
©Stefanie Bürkle/VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2013

den global austauschbaren touristischen Ferienkomplexen an der Küste. Der individuelle Gestaltungsspielraum der Wohnungskäufer beschränkt sich dort auf die Inneneinrichtungen. Unsere Interviewpartner berichteten häufig auch von Umbauten. So entfernte Kemal Usta aus der Stadtwohnung in Mersin in einer Sitesi nicht nur eine Wand, um Küche und Wohnzimmer zu einem einzigen Raum zu vergrößern, sondern setzte sogar ein bodentiefes Fenster ein, um von der Küche aus einen Meerblick zu haben.

## Methoden

Sowohl in der Datenerhebung und Auswertung der Materialien als auch in der Präsentation der Ergebnisse führt der transdisziplinäre Ansatz zwischen Kunst und Architektur zur gegenseitigen Integration von künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Methoden.

## Leitfadengestützte Interviews

In einem ersten Schritt zur Eingrenzung des Forschungsfeldes sind in Berlin lebende türkische Migranten zu ihren Raumvorstellungen im Sinne eines *convenience sampling* befragt worden (Akremi 2014, 272). Dafür entwickelte das Forschungsteam 2013 einen Fragebogen auf der Grundlage vorheriger Lehrforschungsprojekte am Fachgebiet Bildende Kunst, der einen Einblick in Vorstellungen von Räumlichkeiten und Wahrnehmung des Stadtraums ermöglichen sollte. Im Fragebogen war die Aufforderung enthalten, jeweils aus der Erinnerung das Haus oder die Wohnung in Deutschland und das selbstgebaute Haus in der Türkei zu zeichnen. Diese »Methode« der kognitiven Kartierung schuf überhaupt erst die Grundlage für eine konkrete Raumerzählung der Interviewpartner.

Die Frage nach einem eigenen Haus oder einer Immobilie in der Türkei beantwortete in Deutschland gegenüber Dritten niemand. Nur Studierende mit türkischen Migrationshintergrund, die in der Rollendefinition beim Einstieg in das Feld (Flick 2010, 143) nicht als Interviewer, sondern als Familienmitglied Fragen stellten, erhielten überhaupt eine Information zu Immobilienbesitz in der Türkei.

In zehn Interviews mit türkischen Rentnerinnen und Rentnern konnte Helen Krumme wiederkehrende Muster von Remigration erkennen, die sich in starkem Maße am Wohneigentum in der Türkei orientiert, vor allem einen Heimatbegriff, der über die Verortung der Investition erfolgt: »Heimat ist für ihn dort, wo er investiert hat.« (Krumme 2004, 144) Ayşe Şimşek Çağlar konstatiert in ihrer Studie *A Table in Two Hands* (Çağlar 2002), dass von den zwanzig in Berlin lebenden befragten türkischen Familien alle Wohnungen in der Türkei besaßen und dreizehn davon sogar Häuser in ihren Heimatdörfern oder Ferienorten in der Türkei. Das heißt, dass der Anteil der türkischen Migranten mit Wohneigentum in der Türkei groß sein muss. Es liegen dazu jedoch keine gesicherten Zahlen vor. Es kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass nur ein sehr geringer Anteil der türkischen Remigranten in eine Mietwohnung in der Türkei ziehen würde. Die große Mehrheit besitzt Wohneigentum. Dies belegen die Auswertungen statistischer Quellen der Türkei (Sirkeci und Zeyneloğlu 2014). In Deutschland konnten wir, wie beschrieben, nur ungenaue Informationen erhalten, sodass die Feldforschung vor Ort die einzige Alternative darstellte.

2012 bis 2015 wurden insgesamt acht Forschungsreisen in die Türkei durchgeführt. Die Auswahl der Regionen ist auf Grundlage von Informationen durch Hinweise von Gesprächspartnern in der ersten Zufallsbefragung erfolgt. Durch Quervergleiche und Recherchen von Deutschland aus konnte davon ausgegangen werden, dass in den ausgesuchten Regionen eine hohe Dichte an Remigrant\_innen zu erwarten war.

Mit den Remigranten wurden in ihren Räumen leitfadengeführte Interviews durchgeführt. Dazu wurden in verschiedenen Regionen der Türkei türkische Haus- und Wohnungsbesitzer interviewt, die in Deutschland gelebt haben, und deren Umfeld bezüglich der räumlichen Organisation und symbolischen Repräsentation analysiert. Das Haus als Forschungsgegenstand und Demonstrationsobjekt mit Repräsentationsfunktion für die Interviewpartner und als ihr vertrautes Wohnumfeld ließ es zu, raumkontextbezogene Daten im Innenraum wie die alltäglichen Aufenthaltsfrequenzen, den Umgang mit Objekten im Haus oder personelle Raumbezüge zu erheben. Der Raumbezug war die Grundlage dafür, ein maximales Ergebnis in der Tiefendimension zu erzielen, weil die Interviewer in der Rolle des Besuchers erschienen (Heinze 2001, 156f.; Flick 2010, 149).

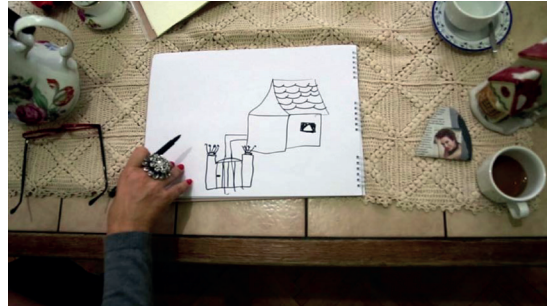
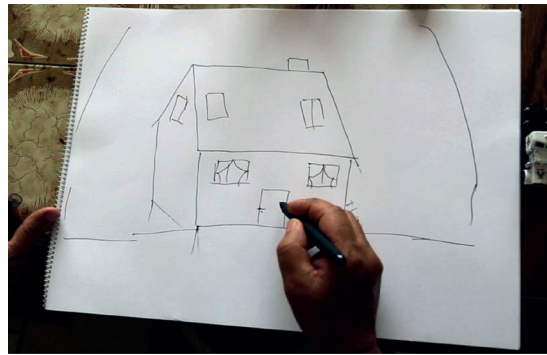


Abb. 5 & 6: Zeichnung der erinnerten Wohnsituation in Deutschland

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## Visuelle Feldforschung

Die visuelle Feldforschung bildete eine wichtige methodische Grundlage. Sie ermöglichte zum einen den Zugang zu den Interviewpartnern und wurde zum anderen selbst als Methode angewandt. Die erkennbaren Abweichungen vom ortsüblichen Baustil waren ein wichtiges Indiz für die Häuser deutsch-türkischer Rückkehrer und ein Ansatz, mit den Bauherren als möglichen Gesprächspartnern in Kontakt zu kommen. Dies gelang in einigen Fällen direkt oder über Nachbarn. Im Schneeballverfahren (Akremi 2014, 272) wurden dann häufig weitere potenzielle Interviewpartner benannt, die ebenfalls aus Deutschland kommen und ein Haus im Ort gebaut hatten.

Mit der Methode der visuellen Feldrecherche wurden räumliche Daten und mittels Foto- und Videografie statische und bewegte Bilder gesammelt, die im weiteren Forschungsverlauf zu analysieren waren. Diese visuelle Feldforschung bediente sich sowohl soziologischer Methoden wie künstlerischer Praktiken. Im interdisziplinären Team unter meiner Leitung als bildender Künstlerin fand die visuelle Feldrecherche eine spezifische Erweiterung, da hier die bildwissenschaftlichen Raumbeschreibungen und raumsoziologischen Analysen im Zentrum eines künstlerischen Verständnisses von Raum als *place* und *space* zusammenfließen. Das Projekt folgt Löw (2009, 354) darin, dass Bilder als symbolische Verdichtungsleistungen Materialität überlagern und als visuelle Argumente Deutungsmuster für politische, historische und normative Bedeutungen anbieten, die soziologisch an die Materialität der Raumkonstitution rückgebunden werden müssen. Dabei wird durch die visuelle Feldforschung die Selbstverfasstheit der Personen im und durch den Raum beschrieben und analysiert.

Im Thesenpapier zur Tagung »Forschung zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft«, die 2012 im Berliner Haus der Kulturen der Welt stattfand, wird künstlerische Forschung als eine »andere« Strategie der Wissensgenerierung beschrieben, die ein weites Spektrum an Forschungsmethoden nutzt, aber Bezüge und Interaktionen zwischen unterschiedlichen Wissensgebieten und Akteuren herstellt und Gestaltungsprozesse operiert (Peters 2013, 8). Ähnlich argumentiert Bippus, wenn sie künstlerische Forschung als eine Verknüpfung der Wissensproduktion mit der Kritik des Willens zur »Wahrheit« des Wissens beschreibt, weil die übliche scharfe Trennung zwischen Theorie und Praxis, zwischen Subjekt und Objekt, zwischen Material und Form allzu oft nicht aufrechterhalten werden könne (Bippus 2012, 16). In diesem Sinne sprechen wir von künstlerischer Forschung. Wir nutzen die Methoden der Feldforschung – wie leitfadengestützte Interviews, kognitive Kartierung oder Videografie –, ohne es jedoch auf einen performativen Charakter abzusehen, der häufig mit einer künstlerischen Forschung verbunden wird. Die Prozessorientierung wird als typische Form künstlerischer Forschung betrachtet, wobei nicht die visuelle Feldforschung gemeint ist, sondern der Dialog mit Akteuren in experimentellen Situationen, in Laboren oder Workshops. Künstlerische Forschung nach diesem Verständnis transferiert das künstlerische Schaffen vom Atelier in die soziale Praxis. Die Akteurinnen und Akteure werden zu mehr oder weniger souveränen Dialogpartnern beziehungsweise zu Versuchspersonen im Experiment. Als Form der Wissenserzeugung wird also in vielen Fällen im Wesentlichen der künstlerische Werkbegriff verstanden, der Kunst als soziale Praxis erweitert oder ein wissenschaftliches Ergebnis durch künstlerische Gestaltungsprozesse vermittelt. Das wäre aber keine neue gleichberechtigte, differente Domäne der Wissensproduktion, wie Brandstetter das behauptet (Brandstetter 2013, 65). Im Gegenteil, die Selbstverfasstheit des

sozialen Raums wird damit weder beschrieben noch analysiert – für die visuelle Feldforschung als Wissenserzeugung ist dies jedoch notwendige Voraussetzung, denn »Kunst ist selten allein der Repräsentation eines einzigen und einmaligen Sachverhalts verpflichtet« (Kravagna 2010).

Für unsere Untersuchung setzen die interdisziplinären Teams deshalb die wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Ansätze innerhalb ihrer Domänen konsequent ein, um sich gegenseitig zu ergänzen und zu verstärken, statt nur zu behaupten, dass Kunst bestehende Konventionen in der wissenschaftlichen Domäne aufbrechen könne. Beide Domänen werden als Systeme begriffen, die der Wissenserzeugung dienen, und die auf dem Forschungsgebiet der Migration von Räumen den raumsoziologischen Kontext um bildnerisch-künstlerische Ansätze erweitern. Im Rahmen dieser sowohl künstlerischen als auch raumsoziologischen Ansätze werden die subjektiven Wahrnehmungen möglichst dicht beschrieben, um Raumeigenschaften genauer zu bestimmen und Typologien zu entwickeln, davon ausgehend, dass räumliche Strukturen im und durch Handeln verwirklicht werden, andererseits aber auch das Handeln strukturieren (Löw 2008, 63).

Der Vergleich der heutigen ortsüblichen Architektur und traditionell türkischen Bauweisen (Küçükerman 1996) einerseits und der davon abweichenden, auffallend anderen Erscheinungsformen in Architektur und Garten andererseits erfordert eine eigene Lesart des Raumkontextes, einen künstlerischen Blick, der in der bildnerischen Form des Bauens gesellschaftliche Realitäten und individuelle Geschichten zu lesen vermag. Dabei werden sowohl Beobachtungen als auch räumliche Narrationen und *mental maps* beziehungsweise eine spezifische Form der Raumdarstellung durch unterstützende Skizzen und Grafiken einbezogen (Dangschat 2014, 976f.). Foto- und Videografie als die Instrumente der visuellen Feldforschung werden als künstlerische Medien verwandt, um die Raumvorstellungen in der Türkei subjektiv wiederzugeben, dienen aber auch als Methode zur Untersuchung der Raumbildung von Remigranten im Innenraum und Außenraum. Dafür wurden zum einen die Interviewsituationen und zum anderen die gebauten Räume der Remigranten im Innenraum und im städtebaulichen Umfeld von Garten, Zufahrt und Nachbarschaft mit Video dokumentiert. Bewusst entschieden wir uns für ein ästhetisches Konzept – die subjektive Kamera –, die den Blick des anwesenden Forschenden repräsentiert und so eine Verbindung zwischen Videoanalyse und Ethnografie darstellt (Knoblauch 2005). Die Kamera dient nicht nur der Dokumentation des Interviewpartners, sondern kreist um ihn und erfasst so die Objekte, Einrichtungsgegenstände und baulichen Elemente im Raum (Tuma et al. 2013, 39). Die Kamera dokumentiert aber auch das städtebauliche Umfeld, so bei solitären Einzelhäusern Zugang und Nachbarschaft, bei Ansiedlungen mit mehreren Häusern den stadträumliche Kontext aus größerer Entfernung.

### Topologische Matrix

Um eine systematisierte Datenerfassung und eine vergleichende Übersicht über ausgewähltes Bildmaterial, Aussagen und Textinformationen zu ermöglichen, wurde eine mehrdimensionale, topologische Matrix entwickelt, die geeignet ist, verschiedene Quellen in relativer Verortung zu räumlichen Lagebeziehungen von Themenkomplexen zusammenzufügen. Sie bietet als Informationsarchitektur und Darstellungsform räumlicher Daten die Grundlage für eine integrative, wissenschaftliche und künstlerische Aufarbeitung der im Vorfeld ausgewerteten Daten und Ergebnisse. Innerhalb des Forschungsprojektes stellt die topologische Matrix die



Schnittstelle zwischen der Recherche-, Reise- und Auswertungsphase dar, denn sie schafft Relationen über biografische, räumliche Bezüge hinaus.

### Ausstellung als Wissensraum

Sowohl in der Auswertung der Materialien als auch in der Präsentation der Ergebnisse führt der transdisziplinäre Ansatz zur gegenseitigen Bereicherung beider Untersuchungsstrategien. Die Forschungsergebnisse werden im künstlerischen und im wissenschaftlichen Kontext durch Publikation und Ausstellung vermittelt. Unterschiedlichen Präsentations- und Diskussionsrahmen sowie unterschiedliche Ausstellungsorte (Berlin, Istanbul, Straßburg) ermöglichen die Betrachtung der Thematik auf Ebenen unterschiedlicher Tiefe aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln.

Durch den multimethodischen Ansatz können raumanalytische und migrationssoziologische Fragestellungen von den beteiligten Disziplinen mit neuen Blickwinkeln diskutiert werden. Als Plattform für diesen

Austausch wurden in Berlin im Haus der Kulturen der Welt zwei Infopanel in der Ausstellung veranstaltet. Im Rahmen zweier Einzelausstellungen (im Haus der Kulturen der Welt und in Salt, einer Kulturinstitution für zeitgenössische Kunst in Istanbul) wird das empirische Material der Feldforschung von mir in ein künstlerisch, sinnlich erlebbares Konzept eingearbeitet und sowohl für Fachpublikum als auch für eine breitere Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht.

Durch die Präsentation der Ergebnisse eines solchen Kunstforschungsprojektes in Form von Ausstellungen im Kontext von Kunst und Kultur werden einer über das Fachpublikum hinausgehenden großen Öffentlichkeit aus ungewöhnlichen Blickwinkeln Zugang zu gesellschaftlich relevanten Themen ästhetisch und sinnlich ermöglicht. Bilder, Forschungstexte und Diskurse werden schließlich in einer künstlerisch/wissenschaftlichen Publikation anstelle eines klassischen Ausstellungskataloges vereint. Dabei ist entscheidend, dass es sich nicht um einen didaktisch vermittelnden oder rein wissensorientierten Ansatz des Ausstellens handelt, sondern um ein offenes Kunstwerk im Sinne Umberto Ecos. Unserem abendländischen ästhetischen Bewusstsein, das unter »Werk« eine personale Produktion versteht, die unabhängig von der Verschiedenheit der Auffassung ihre Physiognomie eines Organismus behält (Eco 1973, 56), stellt Eco das offene Kunstwerk oder Kunstwerke in Bewegung entgegen. Diese sind unter anderem »gekennzeichnet durch die Einladung, zusammen mit dem Hervorbringer das Werk zu machen« (Eco 1989, 139). Den hier deutlich werdenden Unterschied von Kunst und

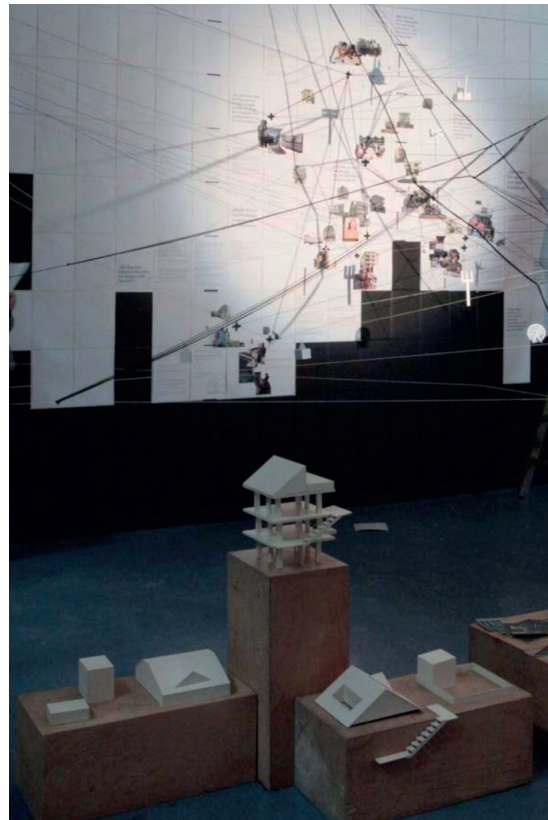


Abb. 7: Topologische Matrix

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didaktischer Wissensvermittlung beschreibt der Anthropologe Wilton Martinez (1995, 150) Beschreibung in den kontroversen Reaktionen von Ethnologiestudierenden auf ethnologische Filme, deren verschiedene Lesarten als Filmzuschauer zu seiner Überraschung nicht den Intentionen dieser Ethnologen entsprechen.

Bezogen auf die konkrete Szenografie der Ausstellung von »Migrating Spaces« funktioniert die Vorstellung vom »offenen Kunstwerk« schon allein dadurch, dass kein lineares Narrativ im Sinne eines Dokumentarfilmes gezeigt wird, sondern eine Komposition aus vier transluzenten Videoleinwänden, die frei verteilt im Raum positioniert sind. Im Modell wurde diese Hängung zuvor erarbeitet.

Der Besucher kann von keinem Punkt im Raum aus alle vier Videoleinwände gleichzeitig einsehen. Die Tonspur mit Aussagen von Interviewpartnern und Tonaufnahmen läuft über Lautsprecher im Raum, Untertitel auf Türkisch und Englisch sind so auf Raumwände projiziert, dass sie problemlos lesbar für den sich im Ausstellungsraum bewegenden Betrachter sind. Jede Besucherin, jeder Besucher schneidet sich gewissermaßen durch das Gehen im Raum im Schauen ihren und seinen eigenen Film, niemand sieht identisch dasselbe Werk. Es entstehen im Sinne Ecos eine Vielzahl an Hervorbringungen eines Werkes, das als solches natürlich immer offen sein muss, um den Betrachtern den Raum eigenen Denkens zu ermöglichen.

»Der Künstler, so kann man sagen, bietet dem Interpretierenden ein zu vollendendes Werk: er weiß nicht genau, auf welche Weise das Werk zu Ende geführt werden kann, aber er weiß, daß das zu Ende geführte Werk immer noch sein Werk, nicht ein anderes sein wird, und daß am Ende des interpretativen Dialogs eine Form sich konkretisiert haben wird, die seine Form ist, auch wenn sie von einem anderen in einer Weise organisiert worden ist, die er nicht vorhersehen konnte« (Eco 1973, 55).

Die Interpretation von Kunst ist nicht lenk- oder kontrollierbar, da dies aber ein immanenter Bestandteil von zeitgenössischer Kunst ist, denkt die Künstlerin bereits im Schaffensprozess den Freiraum für subjektive Auslegungen mit.



Abb. 8: Ausstellung »Migrating Spaces«  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin  
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Abb. 9: Panel in der Ausstellung »Migrating Spaces«  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin  
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# Identity and architecture in Turkish re-migration

## On »Migrating Spaces«, an artistic research project

### Extended Abstract

Stefanie Bürkle

Vilém Flusser (2003), philosopher and mastermind of the digital age, has described migration as a painful and yet creative experience. The metaphor of weaving strand between past *heimat* and the harbouring society, and between the new life and remigration leads to the double oblivion of one's primary cultural experience and insight (Flusser 1998, 1999). Flusser, who has been a migrant all of his life, has used the constant estrangement like an artist as a source for his intellectual inspiration – as the Turkish migrant labourers who gained a kind of freedom paid by economic hardship, resistance and prejudice. In the house that they have finally built based on their continuous and heavy labour, or in the apartment they have furnished, the oeuvre of a life finds its expression.

The attention of the project “Migrating Spaces” (2013-2016) is paid to exactly these houses of German-Turkish builder-owners. An interdisciplinary team of artists and scholars has surveyed the spatial setting and expression of houses built by commuting migrants in Turkey. The survey was carried out in different regions of Turkey and involved 132 houses and apartments of re-migrants that were documented with photos and videos. 37 real estate owners were interviewed based on qualitative guidelines.

In the present research, the concept of space is dynamic: the researchers avoided to consider space split, in a binary way, into locals and migrants, architecture and people, but as relational and constantly moving. In doing so, material properties of place can be related to potentials of their use and appropriation, identification and responsibility. There is no idea of national “identities”, since the debate on transnationalism cannot be bypassed. The critical migration research (Yildiz & Mattausch 2009) offers a frame that is capable of explaining flexibility and context and the (?) dependency of cultural identities – identity understood as a dynamic dimension that is renegotiated for every situation (Römhild 2009).

The relationship of the re-migrant and his building as an oeuvre is mirrored in the relationship of identity and architecture. This is particularly the case when the process of realisation is the oeuvre, not the result as a landmark or representational sign. An architecture of “selfhood” (Schoper 2010, 30) puts the oeuvre in the centre, not its author. In the context of migrational lifespans the design process at first retreats behind a protracted and changing handling of cir-



cumstances, the supply of building matter and other material issues. However, this material aspect is always tied to people, to social contexts that form and express traditional ways of acting. This architecture speaks so to say local and regional dialects as well as foreign languages (Oliver 2006:17). Such an extended concept of identity that is provided by architecture leads to the oeuvre giving its builder-owner his identity. "Identity", then, is not simply a cultural or economic set value that is realised in order to amaze a given social environment, but self-definition that is operated based on experiences in different social situations (Berger et al. 1974). The concepts of space and built space of Turkish re-migrants exhibit differing social and spatial experiences that date back to the time when they left their country of origin, the time of their arrival in the receiving country or of visits back "home".

The houses of the re-migrants are in the first place buildings without architects. We were looking for houses, that "ordinary" people conceived and realised for themselves without a professional architect, since the project's aim was not to document re-migrating architects but houses that were designed by laymen on their own, thus dealing with an "architecture without architects". As architect and historian Rudofsky (1964, 1) put it, "Architecture Without Architects attempts to break down our narrow concepts of the art of building by introducing the unfamiliar world of non-pedigreed architecture. "The meaning of the terms *vernacular*, respectively *non-pedigreed architecture* for this kind of architecture without architects has been introduced in the realm of German academic language as *anonymous architecture*. It applies to both traditional farmhouses and newly built re-migrants' houses, rid of the formal canon of academic architecture.

Visual fieldwork led the researchers to distinguish three main types of houses: The model house, which gives a compact appearance, and has been realised as planned at the start of the planning process. The two-faced house, which is composed of German-type and Turkish-type elements clearly separated from one another. The multi-layer house, whose construction has progressed over many years, with changing relationships of German and Turkish construction concepts and materials.

Re-migrants generally share a desire for their own house, in particular the first generation of emigrants to Germany in the 1960s. Working abroad was guided by the promise to return with the means to build a house, which would give the migrant the reputation of being successful. The contrast between the makeshift housing in Germany did not but fuel the desire for houses back home, whereas the neatly different urbanistic and social contexts of Germany and the idea of returning home encouraged investments into Turkish real estate. These transfers were paid by low living standards in Germany, until the bonds with Germany grew stronger and the emigrants' behaviour changed. As the purchase of real estate in Germany became more common, the acquisition of holiday-type second homes in Turkey increased. These have been realised in cooperatives and as kind of gated communities very much like the tourist enclaves along the Mediterranean coast.

The visual fieldwork into the present topic is seen as a procedure of artistic research. Substantially a transdisciplinary enterprise, it aims at amplifying and complementing scientific and artistic approaches. Thus it does not support the idea that art's task is to break up scientific conventions but considers both domains as systems to answer questions and create knowledge. That is why the project makes use of phenomenological, sociological and artistic thick descrip-

tions, which are capable of making the influence explicit that spatial structures have on cultural practice and vice versa.

Consequently, the results were presented in a transdisciplinary way by publications and exhibitions. Exhibitions in Berlin, Strasbourg and Istanbul re-construct the multiperspectival nature of the topic and realise a loop to the creators of the documented architecture. This is reflected in the spatial layout of the exhibition, where the four video screens cannot be seen at once, whereas the sound of speech is audible throughout.

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DOI: 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.14

**Extended Abstract of:**

Stefanie Bürkle, 'Identität durch Architektur im Kontext türkischer Remigration Über »Migrating Spaces«, ein Kunst- und Forschungsprojekt', *Mobile Culture Studies. The Journal* 4, 2018, 131-146. <<http://unipub.uni-graz.at/mcsj>>

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# Grenzraum in Bewegung

## Künstlerische Positionen und relationale Raumaneignungen

Janine Schemmer

- Abstract** The region Friuli Venezia-Giulia is located in the northeast of Italy, bordering Austria and Slovenia and was a venue of central conflicts in the 20th Century. Its border areas were strongly affected by emigration after the Second World War, which still characterizes the collective memory. Instead of looking at the experience of migration as a field of action, the article deals with those who remained or came back, as many vacant villages revived again in recent years. Taking the example of the area Valli del Natisone, bordering with Slovenia, I will look at how actors from the cultural and art sector discovered the villages for their projects, and deal with the remains of the conflicts and its consequences such as migration movements and depopulation. Using the example of the international festival *Stazione Topolò*, the article explores inhabitants' practices and artistic approaches of spatial appropriation and imaginings of this remote area, and considers what kind of transformation the performativity of human action can bring about. The ethnographic approach is primarily based on interview material and participant observations.
- Keywords** remote border area, landscape, mobility, art, Topolò, Valli del Natisone, Alps-Adriatic region
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.10



## Die Brücke von San Quirino — Einleitung

Der Grenzraum, von dem dieser Beitrag handelt, liegt im Friaul, einer Region im äußersten Nordosten Italiens, die im Norden an Österreich, im Nordosten an Slowenien grenzt. Das Friaul war im 20. Jahrhundert einer der Austragungsorte zentraler europäischer Konflikte. Die Valli del Natisone, also die Täler am Fluss Natisone, die an Slowenien grenzen, waren von diesen Auseinandersetzungen besonders betroffen: im Ersten Weltkrieg verliefen auf den Bergen die Fronten, dort wurden die Schlachten geschlagen. Im Herbst 1943 wurde das Gebiet Teil der deutschen Besatzungszone Adriatisches Küstenland, in dem sich italienische und slowenische Partisanen und deutsche Besatzer gegenüberstanden. Nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg spielte das Gebiet eine zentrale Rolle als Teil eines der Frontstaaten im Kalten Krieg, in dem ideologische und geostrategische Konflikte ausgetragen wurden und militärische Stützpunkte angesiedelt waren. Diese Konflikte haben nicht nur Spuren materieller Natur in der Region und ihrer Landschaft hinterlassen. Diese lassen sich auch in den Erzählungen sowie alltäglichen und künstlerischen Handlungen verschiedener Akteure in den Tälern nachzeichnen, die ich exemplarisch in diesem Artikel heranziehe.

Von Udine, einer der größeren Städte der Region kommend, führt die Landstraße Nr. 54 in die Täler des Natisone. Der Fluss Natisone, der in den Julischen Alpen, dem Grenzgebiet zwischen Slowenien und Italien, entspringt, gibt den Dörfern ihren Namen. Die dort liegenden Dörfer umfassen sieben Gemeinden (San Pietro, Grimacco, Drenchia, Stregna, San Leonardo, Savogna und Pulfero) und sind nur wenige Kilometer von Slowenien entfernt.

Die Brücke von San Quirino befindet sich im kleinen Ortsteil San Quirino, der zur Gemeinde San Pietro gehört, und verläuft über den Natisone. Die Brücke ist unscheinbar und nur wenige Meter lang. Als eigenständiges Bauwerk nimmt man sie kaum wahr, denn der Fluss fließt einige Meter unter der Brücke durch sein steiniges Bett hindurch. Dass man sie überquert bemerkt man am ehesten am Straßenverlauf, der sich über sie hinweg sehr kurvenreich gestaltet ist.

Die Brücke von San Quirino bildet das Tor und den Eingang in die Täler des Natisone. Passiert man sie, zweigt die Straße in Richtung der verschiedenen Täler ab. Je weiter man in die Täler fährt, umso schmaler werden die Landstraßen, die sich entlang des Flusses in die dünn besiedelte Hügellandschaft winden. Bei den ersten Besuchen ist es nicht leicht, hier die Orientierung zu behalten. Nicht an jeder Kreuzung sind Straßenschilder vorhanden, und zum Teil wird auf diesen auf so viele Dörfer verwiesen, dass man vor den Schildern anhalten muss, um sich ein



Abb. 1: Die Brücke San Quirino, Janine Schemmer, Mai 2018.



Abb. 2: Zweisprachiges Straßenschild, Janine Schemmer, Mai 2018.

Bild des weiteren Verlaufs zu machen. Außerdem fällt bei der Beschilderung ins Auge, dass die Ortsnamen zweisprachig auf Italienisch und Slowenisch abgedruckt sind, ein Verweis auf die Geschichte der Dörfer.

Egal, mit wem man in den Dörfern ins Gespräch kommt und worum sich dieses dreht, und egal, welche Publikationen und Webseiten-Einträge man liest, die Brücke von San Quirino, ihre Geschichte und Bedeutung werden fast immer und

in unterschiedlichsten Kontexten angesprochen und erläutert. Brücken bilden Übergänge zwischen zwei Punkten, sie verbinden Landschaften, Wege und Menschen miteinander, zeigen aber auch Trennlinien unterschiedlicher Qualität auf. Die Brücke von San Quirino hat aus verschiedenen Gründen einen hohen symbolischen Wert für die Menschen, die in dieser Gegend geboren sind, von dort weggingen, wieder zurückkamen oder bis heute dort leben. Denn in diesem Grenzraum überlagern sich politische, sprachliche und kulturelle Grenzziehungen. Diese bündeln sich mitunter in den Zuschreibungen an die Brücke von San Quirino, die für die Anwohner der Täler des Natisone nicht nur eine natürlich-räumliche, sondern vor allem eine soziale und kulturelle Grenze darstellt, die einige, vor allem diejenigen, die den älteren Generationen angehören, bis heute ziehen, wie im nächsten Kapitel ausgeführt wird.

Das Beispiel des Umgangs mit der Brücke und ihrer zentralen Position für die Topografie und die Menschen dort zeigt, und hier folge ich Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, dass Grenzen nicht nur Konstrukte »von oben« sind, sondern zugleich auch »von unten« gelebt werden und nach de Certeau »räumestiftende Realitäten bilden« (Schmidt-Lauber 2006, 381). Die Formen, in denen diese Realitäten gelebt und belebt werden und die Praktiken, die dabei zum Tragen kommen, möchte ich in diesem Beitrag näher betrachten. Es geht mir nachfolgend nicht um die Erfahrungen der Migration als Handlungsfeld, sondern vielmehr um den Umgang mit ihren Folgen, wie Entvölkerung, und ihre Bedeutungen für die Menschen und ihren Lebensraum.

Viele leerstehende Häuser und Dörfer im Grenzraum füllten sich in den letzten Jahren wieder. Neben Remigranten und neuen Zuwanderern aus den umliegenden Regionen entdeckten Akteure aus dem Kultur- und Kunstbetrieb die Täler für ihre Projekte. Sie bringen neue Bewegungen in die Gegend und setzen sich mit Konflikten und Folgen wie Migrationsbewegungen auseinander. Bereits seit mehreren Jahrzehnten beschäftigen sich unterschiedliche lokale Kulturinitiativen mit der bewegten Geschichte der Region. In diesen Prozessen lassen sich verschiedenartige Herangehensweisen und Positionen ausmachen, die unterschiedliche Dynamiken entfalten und sich mitunter auf die generationellen Lagerungen der Akteure



zurückführen lassen. Die Mehrzahl von ihnen setzt sich zum Ziel, lokale Traditionen kulinarischer oder landwirtschaftlicher Art zu bewahren und weiterzugeben. Oft verharren die Akteure dabei in überlieferten Narrativen und öffnen sich neuen Einflüssen und Entwicklungen nur wenig. Dagegen versuchen die hier vorgestellten künstlerischen Akteure und Initiativen, aus den Dörfern und von außen kommend, bestehende kulturelle Grenzen und deren Validität durch ihre Arbeiten zu befragen, zu hinterfragen und vielleicht auch zu überschreiten. Eines dieser Projekte ist das internationale Kultur- und Kunstfestival *Stazione Topolò*. Es trägt den Namen des kleinen Dorfes Topolò, das zur Gemeinde Grimacco gehört, und findet seit 1994 in den ersten zwei Juliwochen statt. Einige Künstler bleiben den gesamten Zeitraum über im Ort, und setzen sich während ihres Aufenthaltes mit dem Territorium und den damit verbundenen Geschichten auseinander. Mit dieser Form der Mobilität von Künstlern, Kulturschaffenden und -interessierten, die neben unterschiedlichen Akteuren auch die Besucher des Festivals in die entlegenen Dörfer bringt, mit den konkreten Bewegungen vor Ort und mit den (Alltags) Praktiken, die mit dem Festival und seinen Beteiligten in die Dörfer und Täler Einzug gehalten haben, beschäftige ich mich in diesem Beitrag.

Meine ethnografischen Ausführungen basieren auf informellen Gesprächen und Interviews mit Bewohnern und Kulturschaffenden aus den Tälern und der Umgebung sowie auf teilnehmender Beobachtung und Feldnotizen vor und während des Festivals. Ich orientiere mich für diesen Beitrag an den Erzählungen von Gesprächspartner\_innen, insbesondere einer der Mitbegründerinnen und Kuratorinnen des Festivals Topolò. Anhand des Materials nähere ich mich den Grenzziehungen und -überschreitungen und damit den kulturellen und transnationalen Bewegungen und Begegnungen, die in diesem Raum stattfinden, an.

Nachfolgend möchte ich kurz schildern, welche politischen Prozesse diesen Grenzraum und seine konfliktbehaftete Geschichte prägten. Darauf folgt eine theoretische Annäherung an die Begriffe Landschaft, Mobilität und Grenzräume. Anschließend betrachte ich die Kulturtechnik des Gehens durch die Dörfer, denn die körperliche Bewegung im und durch den Grenzraum stellte sich einerseits für das Verständnis seiner Geschichte, andererseits für den gegenwärtigen Zugang durch die Kunst- und Kulturschaffenden als zentral heraus. Daraufhin vollziehe ich die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Festivals und der Raumeignung durch die künstlerischen Praktiken nach. Wie werden Dörfer und Landschaft durch die Künstler wahrgenommen, und auf welche Weise bespielen sie diese Räume? Im Schluss frage ich, welche Art der Grenzüberschreitungen die künstlerischen Annäherungen ermöglichen.

### **Der Grenzraum im östlichen Friaul — Einblick in die Geschichte**

An der Brücke von San Quirino lässt sich knapp auch die Geschichte der Täler und der Menschen dort erzählen. Die Brücke kann erstens als symbolisch für den ethnischen Konflikt gelten, der seit über 100 Jahren den Alltag in den Dörfern prägt und mitbestimmt. Die Slowenen, die seit Jahrhunderten in den Dörfern lebten, bilden seit dem Prozess der italienischen Nationenbildung die Minderheit in der Region. Fabio Bonini, etwa 70 Jahre alt, den ich durch sein Engagement in einem der vielen lokalen Kulturvereine der Dörfer kenne, erklärt bei einem unserer Treffen, dass die Brücke die ethnische Grenze zwischen den Slowenen und den Friaulern bildet:

»Rechts der Brücke leben die Friulaner, links davon die Slowenen. Das Friaul ist flach, hier ist es bergig. Dort unten lebt man auf eine bestimmte Weise, hier auf eine andere. Das Denken der Friulaner folgt der Logik des flachen Landes, wir denken ganz anders.«

Er schreibt diese Grenze bis heute fest und macht den Charakter der Menschen zum einen an der Region, aus der sie kommen, fest, zum anderen führt er anschließend die unterschiedlichen Machthaber aus, die über die Jahrzehnte über die Dörfer herrschten und mit ihrer Politik auch die kulturellen Lebensweisen beeinflussten (vgl. Banchig 2013). In seinen Schilderungen verweist er immer wieder auf die Ressentiments, die die slowenische Minderheit seit 1918, als die Dörfer Italien zugesprochen wurden, von Seiten der italienischen Bevölkerung in den nächstgelegenen (Klein)Städten erfuhr, die keine zehn Kilometer entfernt liegen.

Neben den globalen Konflikten waren die Bewohner der Dörfer im Alltag auch mit nationalstaatlichen Ideologien konfrontiert, die zu regionalen Spannungen zwischen der italienisch- und slowenischsprachigen Bevölkerung führten. Schon im 19. Jahrhundert ergriff die Politik im Kontext der Nationenbildung Maßnahmen, um den slowenischen Dialekt zu unterbinden, den die slowenische Minderheit im Grenzraum sprach. Während der faschistischen Diktatur spitzten sich diese Maßnahmen zu, und prägten die Erfahrungen der Anwohner auch während des Kalten Krieges nachhaltig (vgl. Cozzi 2009). Allerdings wird der Dialekt bis heute von Anwohnern und Emigranten gesprochen, und steht symbolisch für ihren Eigensinn (Lindenberger 2014). Diese konfliktbehaftete Erfahrung wird vor allem von Angehörigen älterer Generationen wie Fabio, die geblieben sind oder nach vielen Jahren im Ausland wieder zurückkehrten, immer wieder thematisiert. In Anlehnung an Wolf-Dietrich Bukow lässt sich dabei von einer Ethnisierung der Biographien sprechen, wie sie in vielen Migrationsbiografien anzutreffen ist (vgl. Apitzsch 1999).

Die Sprache bleibt bis heute ein bedeutendes Instrument zur Identifikation und Positionierung. So waren viele Emigranten aus den Dörfern durch den Dialekt gewissermaßen schon als Außenseiter stigmatisiert, bevor sie ihre Herkunftsdörfer verließen. Durch das erzählerische Verweben individueller Erfahrungen mit den sprachlichen und kulturellen Traditionen einer sozialen Gruppe konstruieren sich so die vorherrschenden Selbst- und Fremdbilder (vgl. Braun 2006). Bezüglich der Außenwahrnehmung fügt auch Donatella Rutar, die an späterer Stelle ausführlich vorgestellt wird, hinzu, man sei als Außenstehender auch viele Jahre nach dem Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs nicht in die Täler des Natisone gegangen, und habe von den Anwohnern keine gute Meinung gehabt. Vielmehr herrschten negative Einstellungen und Meinungen gegenüber den Bewohnern in den entlegenen Dörfern vor. So ziehen viele auch Außenstehende bis heute eine ethnische Grenze, die sie an der Brücke San Quirino verorten. Zum Teil nehmen diese Grenzziehungen auch performative Züge an. Bei einer Veranstaltung von Fabios Kulturverein zu dörflichen Traditionen anlässlich der Sonnenwende, bei dem ausschließlich italienischsprachiges Publikum anwesend war, wurden die Bräuche von einer Person auf Slowenisch erklärt, und dann von einer zweiten für die Gäste ins Italienische übersetzt.

Zweitens steht die Brücke symbolisch für die politischen Konflikte, die seit 1915 in der Region ausgetragen wurden und tiefgreifende Spuren hinterlassen haben. Die Brücke ist aus Stein gebaut und mutet aufgrund ihrer Materialität alt an. Im Zweiten Weltkrieg wurde die Brücke jedoch von Partisanen zerstört, um den Zugang zu blockieren, und nach dem Krieg neu errichtet. Fabio sucht bei Führungen mit seinem Kulturverein mit den Besuchern unter ande-



rem die Schützengräben in der Region aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg auf. Aus seinen Schilderungen wird deutlich, dass nicht nur die beiden Weltkriege eine Zäsur darstellten. Auch die Zeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg beschreibt Fabio als Krieg nach dem Krieg: »Der Krieg ging hier weiter. Das kann man Menschen von außen nur schwer erklären. Aber man durfte hier nicht bauen, nur das Militär.« Der politische Umgang mit dem Kalten Krieg nahm starken Einfluss auf die lokalen Lebensverhältnisse, auf die Praktiken im Alltag und die Identifikationen der Menschen. Da in den Militärzonen kein Betrieb seine Arbeit aufnehmen konnte und damit kaum Arbeitsplätze vorhanden waren, wanderten immer mehr Menschen aus. Die Dörfer, kommentiert Fabio, wurden von politischer Seite regelrecht entleert.

Drittens steht die Brücke daher für die Emigration aus der Region. Während Anfang der 1950er Jahre noch ca. 18.000 Menschen in den Dörfern lebten, ging ihre Zahl bis heute auf ca. 6.000 zurück. Zunächst fanden viele als Minenarbeiter in Belgien eine Beschäftigung, woran ein Denkmal vor dem Rathaus der Gemeinde San Pietro erinnert. In vielen Familien ist das Thema der Emigration bis heute präsent. Man erzählt sich bis heute die Geschichte der Kohlen Säcke, die die Familien für jeden Mann, der wegging, erhielten. Andere Emigrationsländer waren die Schweiz, Deutschland, Kanada, Argentinien, Australien und die USA (vgl. Banichig 2013, 344f.). Ein Großteil der von hier emigrierten und noch hier lebenden Menschen machte die »Erfahrung gewaltsamer Entwurzelung« (Schlögel 2003, 453). Die Entvölkerung, die mit den dort ausgetragenen Konflikten einsetzte, lässt sich in den Dörfern, in denen viele Häuser einen Großteil des Jahres leer stehen, bis heute nachvollziehen und begreifen. Heute leben unterschiedliche Menschen aus Slowenien und Italien in den Dörfern. Viele alte Netzwerke bleiben bis heute bestehen, wovon unter anderem die jährlich stattfindenden Rückkehrtreffen zeugen. Auch die internationalen Kennzeichen der Autos, die einem im Sommer ins Auge stechen, verweisen auf die bis heute bestehenden Verbindungen von Emigranten und deren Nachfahren zur Region.

So lässt sich dieser italienisch-slowenische Grenzraum als ein weiteres »Erfahrungszentrum europäischer Geschichte« (Eisch-Angus 2006, 253) charakterisieren. Nicht nur im Dorf Topolò, in der gesamten Landschaft kulminieren diese Geschehnisse und Erfahrungen.

## **Bewegung und Mobilität in Grenz-Landschaften — Theoretische Überlegungen**

Michel de Certeau beschreibt den Raum als »Geflecht von beweglichen Elementen« (1988, 218). Raum und auch Landschaft sind keine gegebenen und in sich abgeschlossenen Größen, sondern unterliegen einem ständigen Prozess, sie befinden sich in ständiger Bewegung. Gleiches gilt auch für die Wege, Straßen und Routen, die Menschen zurücklegen, und die dadurch zirkulierenden Kulturen, wie James Clifford zeigt (vgl. Russell 2007, 365). Bewegungen jeglicher Art hinterlassen ihren Abdruck in den Landschaften und den Erzählungen, die über diese zirkulieren.

Mobilität aus einer kulturanalytischen Perspektive zu betrachten bedeutet, »Bewegungen von Menschen, ihren Körpern, Gedanken, Handlungen und Dingen zu erforschen.« (Rolshoven 2011, 54). Dabei spielen die Voraussetzungen und Konditionen sowie Raum und Zeit, die in den jeweiligen Situationen und Kontexten auf diese Bewegungen Einfluss nehmen oder sie bewirken, eine zentrale Rolle. Bewegung kann in diesem Kontext als Metapher für verschiedene Dispositionen und Situationen stehen. Sie kann Aufbruch oder Rückkehr bedeuten,

körperliche Aktivität oder Veränderungen materieller Art, und sie steht immer auch in engem Zusammenhang mit dem Unbewegten, dem Verbleibenden, dem scheinbar Immobilen. Daher sind die unterschiedlichen Konditionen und Konsequenzen von Mobilität und Bewegung ein zentraler Aspekt. Diese divergieren in hohem Maße, je nachdem, ob der Blick auf den Akteuren liegt, die zurückgeblieben sind, auf denen, die zurückkommen oder auf jenen, die ganz fortbleiben.

Tim Ingold plädiert dafür, bei der Beschäftigung mit Landschaften eine »dwelling perspective« einzunehmen, also den lokalen Praktiken von Akteuren und deren Effekte und Wirkungen auf die Räume verstärkt Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken. Er begreift Landschaft als beständigen Speicher vergangener materieller, aber auch kultureller Geschehnisse, die dort ihre Spuren hinterlassen haben. Er hebt den relationalen Kontext hervor, den der Umgang mit der Landschaft evoziert, die von den Erfahrungen der Menschen geprägt und damit kulturell geformt ist. Denn die gebaute Umwelt, das Sichtbare, aber auch das Unsichtbare, das Imaginierte prägen unsere Raumnutzung und -erfahrung. Die materiellen, stofflichen und kulturellen Spuren gilt es zu lesen: »The landscape tells – or rather is – a story.« (Ingold 1993, 152). Grenzlandschaften beinhalten Geschichte in verdichteter Form. Grensräume sind Zonen des Konfliktes, des Abstandnehmens, der Entfremdung, aber auch der Annäherung, des Kontaktes und des Austauschs. Die Formen der Grenzziehungen und -überschreitungen wirken sich auf die jeweiligen Mobilitätspraktiken (körperlicher und mentaler Art) aus. An der Geschichte der Täler lassen sich diese unterschiedlichen Grenzziehungen und die damit einhergehenden kulturellen Differenzenerfahrungen und deren Wirkung bis in die Gegenwart veranschaulichen. Zwar zeugen bis heute zahlreiche Spuren wie Schützengräben, Höhlen, Grenzmarkierungen, aber auch infrastrukturelle Baumaßnahmen wie Brunnen zur Wasserversorgung von Soldaten von vergangenen Auseinandersetzungen. Allerdings erschließt sich die Geschichte der Täler des Natisone nicht auf den ersten Blick. Nur wer genau hinsieht und mit Hintergrundwissen ausgestattet ist, kann die Spuren lesen und einordnen. Die Landschaft in den Tälern erzählt dabei nicht nur die Geschichten der Kriege und Konflikte, sondern auch von der Abwesenheit der Menschen. Dichte Wälder, Wiesen und Sträucher dominieren heute die über Jahrzehnte hinweg überwiegend durch Landwirtschaft kultivierte Region. Die Vegetation hat in den Jahren der Entvölkerung wieder viel Raum eingenommen, und stellt die dort lebenden Menschen täglich vor Herausforderungen. Der Umgang mit der Natur, der Nutzen und die Kontrolle der Landschaft sind hier relevant. Die natürliche, die materielle und kulturelle Beschaffenheit der Landschaft, das wird in den Schilderungen der Gesprächspartner deutlich, spielt für das Verständnis des Alltags der dort lebenden Menschen und für das Festival *Stazione Topolò*, wie später noch ausgeführt wird, eine zentrale Rolle. Durch das körperliche Erfahren und Begehen einer Landschaft in Form eines Spaziergangs oder einer Wanderung ist es möglich, ein Verständnis der Landschaft und der ihr eingeschriebenen Geschichten zu entwickeln und sich zu dieser in Beziehung zu setzen. »Through walking, in short, landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending.« (Tilley, zitiert in Ingold 2004, 333). Diese enge Verknüpfung und Wechselwirkung zwischen Mensch und Landschaft, kulturellen Praktiken und Formen ist einer der Ausgangspunkte des Festivals und des Alltags vor Ort.



## Zwischen den Dörfern – Die Landschaft erlaufen und erfahren

Ich fahre in die Täler und treffe mich dort mit Donatella Rutar, Mitbegründerin und Kuratorin der *Stazione Topolò*, zum Interview. Wir sind bei ihr zuhause verabredet. Sie lebt in einer der Gemeinden nahe Topolò. Donatella ist etwa 50 Jahre alt, Architektin, Kulturschaffende und als Lehrerein an einer zweisprachigen Schule im größten Ort der Täler tätig.

Sie bietet mir zunächst Kaffee an, und fragt mich dann, ob wir das Gespräch auch bei einem Spaziergang führen könnten. Gerne willige ich ein, die Gegend etwas genauer kennenzulernen. So gehen wir die asphaltierte Straße entlang, entfernen uns von ihrem Haus und bewegen uns bergauf, in Richtung des Dorfes, aus dem ihr Vater kommt, wie sie betont. Auf dem Weg gehen wir an mehreren Ansiedlungen von Häusern vorüber. Die meisten sind zumindest äußerlich in einem guten Zustand, stehen aber fast das ganze Jahr über leer, weil viele Eigentümer nicht mehr kommen, erklärt Donatella. Die Topographie lässt den früheren harten Alltag in der räumlichen Abgeschiedenheit vermuten.

Auch Donatella zog es als junge Frau aus den Dörfern hinaus. Für das Architekturstudium verließ sie damals ihren Herkunftsort und ging nach Venedig. Eine Rückkehr konnte sie sich nicht vorstellen, wie sie erzählt. Verbindungen in die Täler blieben aber immer bestehen, da sie schon als junge Frau einen Kulturverein dort leitete. Sie sagt, es seien viele Zufälle gewesen, die ihre damalige Entscheidung beeinflusst hätten, sich wieder in den Dörfern niederzulassen.

Einer der Beweggründe war das Festival *Stazione Topolò*, das sie mit ihrem damaligen Partner und weiteren Freunden 1993 ins Leben rief.

Die Dörfer in den Tälern des Natisone sind verbunden durch alte Straßen und Fußwege. Diese alten Straßen sind wichtig, da sie die Dörfer auf direktem Wege verbinden und man so schnell von einem ins nächste kommt. Früher verkürzten sie die Arbeitswege der Menschen, die vor allem von Landwirtschaft lebten. Viele der Wege sind inzwischen von Pflanzen und Bäumen überwuchert und wurden über die Jahrzehnte, in denen sie kaum benutzt wurden, von der Natur eingenommen. Einige sind mittlerweile wieder bereinigt, von der Vegetation befreit, die die Wege in Folge der Entvölkerung wieder übernommen hatte, und führen erneut über die Hügel, die Wiesen und durch die Wälder. Inzwischen sind wir bei unserem Spaziergang im Dorf Brida angekommen, von wo aus sich ein überwältigendes Panorama über das Tal bietet. Dort machen wir eine Pause und erfrischen uns am örtlichen Brunnen. Die Häuser und Gärten dort sind sehr gepflegt, hier leben viele Menschen das ganze Jahr über. Donatella schlägt vor, nicht auf der asphaltierten Hauptstraße weiter zu gehen, sondern in einen der alten Fußwege abzubiegen, um wieder nach unten zu gelangen.

Bernhard Tschofen beschreibt das Gehen als Kulturtechnik und »bewusst eingesetzte Bewegungskompetenz«, die unter anderem Rückschlüsse auf die kulturelle Orientierung zulässt und »einen wesentlichen Anteil an der Inszenierung des Selbst gewinnt« (Tschofen 2013, 65f.). Die körperliche Bewegung, das Erlaufen der alten Straßen und Wege und damit der Landschaft und ihrer Geschichte ist ein zentraler Aspekt im Alltag der Täler. Das vermittelt mir Donatella immer wieder während des Gesprächs und durch unseren Spaziergang. Durch das gemeinsame Gehen, bei dem mir die Interviewpartnerin die Landschaft nicht nur physisch, sondern vor allem auch in ihrer historischen Gewordenheit zugänglich macht, weist sie sich als Kennerin und Expertin und legitime Sprecherin darüber aus. Auch touristisch wird ein Teil der Wege seit einigen Jahren immer mehr genutzt. Zwar gibt es kaum touristische Infrastrukturen, aber

gerade diese wilde und unbelassene Natur, die hier an vielen Orten noch auffindbar ist, macht für viele Wanderer den Reiz aus. Das österreichische Universitätskulturzentrum UNIKUM, ein »Ort angewandter Kulturarbeit, der künstlerische Praxis und kreative Forschung miteinander verbindet«, so die Beschreibung auf der Website, hat unter anderem in Kooperation mit der *Stazione Topolò* den »Atlas der besonderen Orte« (Universitätskulturzentrum 2011) herausgegeben. Die Landschaftsporträts und Wanderrouen, die das Autorenteam darin zeichnen, haben die Gegend bekannt und für Liebhaber entlegener Gegenden erfahrbar gemacht.

Auf die wilde und unbelassene Natur, die sich aufgrund der Entvölkerung die früher durch Ackerbau bewirtschaftete Landschaft zurückerobert hat, verweist auch Donatella während unseres Spaziergangs:

»In Topolò leben jetzt 9 Menschen, 9 Menschen! Weißt du, was das bedeutet? Das ist nichts. Früher waren es 400, zwischen den zwei Kriegen. Und alle hatten viele Tiere. In dem Dorf war kein Plätzchen mehr frei. Ein ganzes Gebiet ist in diesem Jahrzehnt der Grenze entvölkert worden. Und in diesem Zeitraum sind so viele Dinge passiert, die alle zur heutigen Situation geführt haben. Aber nicht nur zum Leerstand, sondern auch zum Verlust der gesamten Kultur dieses Raumes, der mittlerweile vom Wald dominiert wird. Und ein Raum ist, in dem man eigentlich auch keine Möglichkeiten mehr ergreifen kann. Als Einzelner vielleicht schon, ich habe mich ja auch dazu entschlossen, Widerstand zu leisten und zu bleiben. Ich bin mir dessen bewusst.«

Donatella bezieht hier deutlich Position und thematisiert die Randständigkeit der Gegend und die Schwierigkeiten, die der Alltag in den entlegenen Tälern mit ihrer komplexen Vergangenheit impliziert. Dennoch oder vielleicht gerade deswegen gründete sie mit anderen genau an diesem Ort die *Stazione*. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Landschaft durch den unmittelbaren Zugang zu ihr und ihrer Geschichte haben die Initiatoren des Festivals zu einem Ausgangspunkt gemacht.

### Topolò — Grenzverschiebungen zwischen Peripherie und Zentrum

Der Name des Dorfes Topolò klingt nicht sonderlich italienisch, in ihm sind die Grenzlage, die historischen Veränderungen und der Umgang mit diesen eingeschrieben. Auch der Eintrag auf Wikipedia verweist implizit darauf. Dort sind drei verschiedene Namen und Schreibweisen aufgeführt: *Topolovo* heißt es auf Slowenisch, *Topoluove* im lokal gesprochenen slowenischen Dialekt. Für die Straßenbeschilderung einigte man sich auf den Kompromiss *Topolove*, der neben der italienischen Bezeichnung abgedruckt ist. Die Wikipedia-Seite ist auf Italienisch und (mit sehr knappen Ausführungen) auf Holländisch verfügbar, was auf die enge Verbindung zu den holländischen Künstlern, die seit Jahren am Festival teilnehmen, verweist.

Am Fuße des Dorfes befindet sich ein Parkplatz. Dort werden motorisierte Fahrzeuge abgestellt, ab hier geht es nur noch zu Fuß weiter. Es geht hinein ins Dorf und bergauf, denn es liegt am Hang des Berges Kolovrat, auf dem die Grenze zu Slowenien verläuft. Topolò ist in gewisser Weise ein typisches Dorf der Täler: verwinkelte Wege führen zwischen alten Steinhäusern mit Holzbalkonen hindurch. Enge Gassen schlängeln sich zwischen den Häusern in Richtung des Dorfplatzes und der Kirche hindurch, die sich am höchsten Punkt befindet.

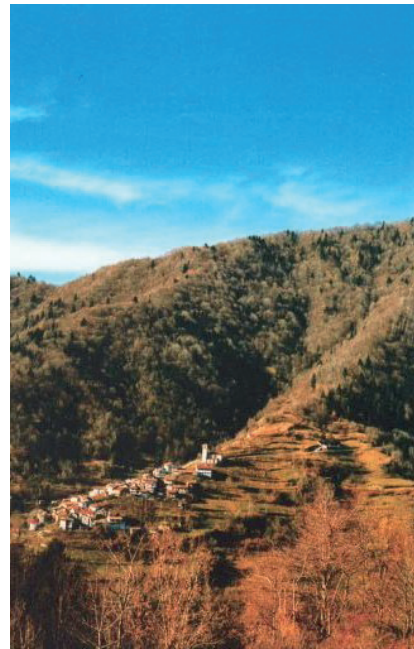


Zwischendurch passiert man immer wieder kleine Plätze, Gärten und Terrassen. Bis auf die Kirche existieren keine dörflichen Infrastrukturen mehr. In Topolò kann man sich leicht verlieren, die kleinen Abzweigungen laden zu Abstechern ein, die zum Teil direkt in die Natur führen, aber genauso leicht findet man wieder auf den Hauptweg zurück. Der Ort und seine Lage inmitten der Natur verführen dazu, neue Wege einzuschlagen, neue Richtungen auszuprobieren, und sich dem Zufall und Entdeckungen zu überlassen. Der Ort wirkt wild, romantisch, still, aber auch abgelegen, einsam und verlassen, ist Ruhepol und Randzone gleichermaßen.

Als das Festival *Stazione Topolò* erstmals durchgeführt wurde, fand man den Ort noch auf keiner Landkarte, bekräftigt Donatella. Der Fall der Mauer war damals gerade erst wenige Jahre vergangen, und die Stimmung des Kalten Krieges prägte die Mentalität der Menschen. Dennoch war den Gründern klar, dass das Festival nur hier funktionieren würde. Der damalige Partner von Donatella kam selbst aus Topolò, anfangs lebten beide dort. Donatella betont, dass die Bewohner des Dorfes besonders zugänglich und der Idee gegenüber tolerant waren, und für sie die Natur stets von Wichtigkeit war. In einem anderen Dorf wäre die Durchführung nicht möglich gewesen. Schon in den ersten Jahren kamen die Künstler aus unterschiedlichen Ländern. Finanziert wurde das ganze durch einen Verein, den sie betrieben. Ein Projekt, das auch nur ein Jahr hätte dauern können. Und sich dann aus unterschiedlichen Gründen verselbständigte. Irgendwie, so Donatella, entwickelte sich immer alles von alleine. In den ersten Jahren wurden vor allem Kunstinstallationen gemacht. Die Ideen entstanden vor Ort, die Ergebnisse wurden während des Festivals gezeigt. Nach einigen Jahren wandelte sich dieser Zugang. Die Idee von Topolò wurde immer imaginativer.

Die Bewegung und die Mobilität stecken bereits im Namen des Festivals: die *Stazione* nimmt in erster Linie auf den Bahnhof Bezug, der im Ort fehlt. Eine Station ist ein Ort, an dem sich Wege und Pfade kreuzen, ein Ort der Ankunft und der Abreise, ein Durchgangsort. Damit verweist der Name auf die schwierige Randlage des Dörfchens. Die Bezeichnung, so Donatella, steht ganz bewusst für etwas, das nicht in materialisierter Form vorzufinden ist:

»Topolò war ein Ort, den man nicht mal auf Landkarten gefunden hat. Machen wir es also zu einem Ort der Begegnung, war unser Credo. Also zum Gegenteil dessen, was man schließlich vor Ort vorfindet. Aber die *Stazione* steht natürlich auch für viele andere Metaphern. Und diese wurden von den Künstlern auch aufgegriffen: von der Bahnhofshalle über die Stationen des Kreuzweges. Aber ich erinnere mich, am Anfang diskutierten auch die Bewohner darüber. In der Bar meiner Mutter sagten sie, es gibt doch nicht mal einen Bus, und jetzt wollen sie den Zug nach Topolò holen? Weil wir von dieser Station wie von einem echten Bahnhof gesprochen haben. Und überhaupt wusste ja niemand, ob es sie tatsächlich gab oder nicht. Wie sie war,



**Abb. 3:** Am Hang des Berges Kolovrat liegt, umgeben von Wäldern, Topolò, Robida Nr. 5/2018, S. 6.

oder was sie war. Einer der ersten Künstler des Festivals, der auch aus dieser Gegend kommt, erstellte dann im ersten Jahr die Ankunfts- und Abfahrtszeiten der Züge. Und so gab es diesen Zeitplan, der schließlich auch in den Bars einiger umliegender Dörfer herumgereicht wurde. (...) Ein faltplan mit falschen Sponsoren drauf.«

Die Metapher der *Stazione*, erzählt Donatella weiter, ist vom Gedicht *La stazione di Zimà* inspiriert, verfasst vom russischen Dichter Jewgeni Alexandrowitsch Jewtuschenko. Darin umschreibt dieser die Ruhe und das Warten vor Ort auf Bewegung, auf das Zusammen- und Weiterkommen. Die Stimmung, die das Gedicht transportiert, brachte der zweite Kurator des Festivals, Moreno Miorelli, mit Topolò in Verbindung. Sie ließ ihn nicht mehr los, und so wurde der Name assoziativ geboren. Ohne eine Verbindung zur realen Geschichte und Bezügen sollte der Ort durch kreative Zugänge, künstlerische Fiktionen, Vorstellungen und Erzählungen neu imaginiert werden.

Der Bahnhof steht als Metapher für die Bewegungen, die jedes Jahr in den ersten zwei Wochen im Juli mit der *Stazione* wieder ins Dorf Einzug finden und sich auf unterschiedliche Weisen entfalten. Urbane Bezüge spielen in diesem Kontext eine zentrale Rolle. Für Thomas Hengartner ist der Bahnhof »urbanes Phänomen par excellence« (1994, 187). Zuschreibungen, die klassischerweise in Zusammenhang mit der Stadt stehen, werden hier auf die Peripherie übertragen. Durch die Herstellung von Referenzen an den Stadtraum positionieren die Kuratoren das Festival in einem imaginierten Zentrum, überwinden die periphere Lage und stellen Topolò in den Fokus des Geschehens. Mit dem Bezug auf städtische Orte und Institutionen übertragen sie diese anhand situationistischer Strategien aufs Land. Dabei werden Stadt und Land allerdings nicht als Gegensätze gedacht. Im Gegenteil: durch die *Stazione* werden diese Gegensätze überwunden und so eine Kontinuität und Relation zwischen diesen Räumen hergestellt.

Das Programm des Festivals war von Beginn an stark auf die Aneignung der Landschaft ausgerichtet. Inhaltliche Rückbezüge auf das Dorf und seine Geschichte bzw. seine bewegte Vergangenheit sind die Ausgangsbasis. Das Festival lädt die Künstler ein, mit den leeren Häusern, Ställen, Straßen, Plätzen, den umliegenden Feldern und mit den Menschen zu interagieren und eine Beziehung aufzubauen. Das alte Schulhaus ist beispielsweise einer der zentralen Spiel- und Ausstellungsorte während des Festivals. Mit Mobilitäten und Folgen von Migrationsbewegungen setzt sich das Festival aus unterschiedlichen Perspektiven auseinander. Blättert man durch die Kataloge der letzten Jahrzehnte, sind immer wieder auftauchende Themen, die verhandelt werden, Identitäten, Aushandlungen von Heimat und Zugehörigkeit.

Wichtig ist bei diesen Auseinandersetzungen die Perspektive, sagt Donatella, mit der man auf die Räume und die ihnen eingeschriebenen Geschichten schaut: im Fokus steht nicht die Grenze, die einst schwer bewaffnet und undurchlässig war, sondern der Gedanke, sich in einem Zentrum zu befinden, in dem neue Perspektiven für die Zukunft (vor Ort) entwickelt werden. So eignen sich die Künstler die Räume und ihre Geschichten auf neue Weise an, und transformieren verfallene Häuser zu relevanten Orten mit neuen Bedeutungen. Daher gibt es wie auch in anderen wichtigen Zentren Botschaften der Länder Holland und Neuseeland. Aus dem kreativen Austausch hat sich so ein umfassendes internationales Netzwerk entwickelt, welches das Dorf mit neuen Funktionen und Praktiken füllt. Außerdem lösen sich dadurch Grenzziehungen kultureller Art in relationaler, ideeller, aber auch in praktischer Hinsicht auf. Etwa,



indem die ehemalige Grenze selbst durch unterschiedliche Performances bespielt und immer wieder neu auf ihre gegenwärtige Wirkung befragt wird.

Es geht den Initiatoren darum, dass Künstler und Besucher das Dorf und seine Gegend mit allen Sinnen erfahren. Man begreift die natürliche Umwelt durch die Augen, die Nase, die Ohren und die Beine. Spaziergänge über Wiesen, Wälder und durch Bäche und Installationen entlang dieser Wege sind elementarer Teil der Veranstaltung. Diese leibliche Erfahrung ist zentral für die künstlerisch-kreative Auseinandersetzung und Annäherung an das Gelände in und um Topolò. Dazu kommt die Bedingung, sich dort dem natürlichen Rhythmus anzupassen. So folgen die Performances keinem strengen Zeitplan, sondern finden bei Sonnenuntergang, jeden zweiten Nachmittag oder täglich am Morgen statt.

### Imaginationen und künstlerische Praktiken

Topolò wurde schnell zu einem wichtigen und bekannten Begegnungsraum in den Tälern. Und das gesamte Dorf zu einem Experimentierfeld. Situationistische Ideen und Strategien prägten die künstlerischen Herangehensweisen seit den Anfängen.

Ein Künstler spann die Idee eines Bahnhofs und urbaner Zentren weiter und legte damals das Konzept eines Flughafens vor, den ersten Flughafen in Topolò. Eine seiner Bekannten, so seine Erzählung, recherchierte in Kassel in Archiven über den Flughafen Topolò und stieß dort auf reichhaltiges Material über diesen. Im Ersten Weltkrieg, so stand es in den fiktiven Archivmaterialien geschrieben, fungierte der Flughafen als wichtiger Stützpunkt. Das Besondere daran war seine Position: er war in Hanglage gebaut und befand sich genau auf der heutigen Grenze zu Slowenien. Die außergewöhnliche Geschichte wurde dem Publikum von vier Performern dargeboten. Untermalt wurde die Performance mit Fundstücken aus fiktiven Tonarchiven und dem Dröhnen der Flugzeugmotoren. Zudem wurden Bilder der Flugzeuge und der Gebäude gezeigt. Auch die deutsche Wissenschaftlerin war anwesend und erläuterte ihre Erkenntnisse.

Doch die Performance beschränkte sich nicht nur auf diesen Abend. Ein Künstler verarbeitete die Idee und publizierte in renommierten italienischen Kunstzeitschriften Texte über den fiktiven futuristischen Künstler Marino Filipic, der aus Topolò stammte, vom Fliegen fasziniert war und sich daher auch an diesem Flughafen aufhielt. Diese Geschichten, so Donatella, wurden abgedruckt, als seien es historische Tatsachen gewesen. Durch ihre Publikation fanden sie so weitere Verbreitung. Res Ingold, Konzeptkünstler und Professor an der Akademie der Bildenden Künste München, der damals an seinem zentralen Werk, den Ingold Airlines, arbeitete, organisierte mit seinen Studenten eine Recherche über Kriegsflughäfen im Ersten Weltkrieg. Zufällig stolperte er über den vermeintlichen Flughafen in den Tälern und nahm Kontakt zu den Kuratoren des Festivals auf. Auch er spann diese Gedanken weiter und nahm mit Lichtinstallationen, die die Silhouetten des ehemaligen Flughafens nachzeichneten, am Festival teil.

Nicht mehr das Aufsuchen historischer Schauplätze, sondern neue Formen der Erzählungen über das Geschehene und über den gegenwärtigen Umgang mit Grenzen und Grenzziehungen stehen im Mittelpunkt der Auseinandersetzung. Auch junge Künstler wie Cosimo Miorelli, der in seinen Live-Paintings die Kriegsgeschichte des ersten Weltkriegs nachzeichnet, beschäftigt sich auf neuartige Weise mit der Geschichte.<sup>1</sup> Zu sehen ist seine Performance auch im multime-

1 Miorelli, Cosimo. 2017. Website „cosimomiorelli, Caporetto • Kobarid 1917-2017 @SMO, 23.10. 2017, <<http://www.cosimomiorelli.com/caporetto-%e2%80%a2-kobarid-1917-2017-smo/>>

dialen interaktiven Museum *SMO* (Slovensko multimedialno okno/das multimediale Fenster nach Slowenien). Begründerin des Museums, das aus einem EU-Projekt hervorging und sich genau wie ihre Schule im größten Ort befindet, war ebenfalls Donatella. Das Museum erzählt an einzelnen Objekten Traditionen und Bräuche, es erzählt mit neuen Instrumenten wie eben dem Live-Painting auch die Kriege und ihre Auswirkungen. Es thematisiert die ökonomischen Probleme dieser Landschaft, etwa am Beispiel der letzten Molkerei, und inszeniert die Natur visuell und als Soundscape. Das zentrale Anliegen, so Donatella, ist es, die jungen Menschen für die Gegend und den komplexen Alltag zu sensibilisieren. Die Ausstellung ist zudem zweisprachig konzipiert und zeigt damit die Vielfalt und die verbindenden Elemente im Grenzraum auf. Durch die Repräsentation der Geschichte anhand unterschiedlicher künstlerischer Zugänge und Elemente verbindet die Ausstellung die künstlerischen Praktiken mit der Alltagsperspektive der Menschen vor Ort und holt die Kunst aus Topolò ins Museum, das wiederum von einem anderen Publikum aufgesucht wird.

### Formen und Möglichkeiten der Grenzüberschreitungen – Transkulturelle Annäherungen

In den Tälern des Natisone lässt sich anschaulich nachvollziehen, »wie globale Transformationsprozesse [wie Migration] sich in einem lokalen Handlungsfeld widerspiegeln« (Scholz-Irrlitz 2008, 8) und in dynamischen Bewegungen neu ausgehandelt werden. Die *Stazione Topolò* lässt sich daher nicht als Ausstellungsort, sondern vielmehr als Prozess begreifen, der Spuren materieller Art (etwa durch den Aus- und Umbau von ehemaligen Wohn- und Geschäftsräumen), stofflicher, ideeller, kultureller und relationaler Art aufgreift, diese umgruppiert, neuformiert und neu artikuliert (vgl. Braun 2006, 24). So lassen sich etablierte Erzählungen aufbrechen und mit neuen Inhalten besetzen.

Kunst wird hier also nicht ausschließlich als Motor für eine Erneuerung des ländlichen Images oder der Infrastruktur eingesetzt bzw. gesehen. Es geht nicht nur um die Aufwertung der Gegend und um eine Attraktion, die Besucher anziehen soll. Im Fokus steht vielmehr die inhaltliche und künstlerische Auseinandersetzung mit vergangenen und gegenwärtigen Lebenswelten und Alltags in Randzonen und mit aus vielen Gründen verlassenem und vergessenen Landschaften.

Von verschiedenen Seiten wurde der Vorwurf laut, die *Stazione* sei kaum für die lokale Bevölkerung konzipiert, sondern sehr in sich geschlossen und spreche vielmehr die Künstler an, die sich dort entfalten können, aber unter sich bleiben. Ein Ferienort also für Künstler und Kulturschaffende (vgl. Ramsden&Shaw 2003, 189)? In gewisser Weise mag das zutreffen. Aber durch unterschiedliche Interventionen und Verknüpfungen erlangte das Festival und damit auch die Gegend internationale Bekanntheit und kreiert transversale relationale Netzwerke. Damit können sich wiederum neue Handlungsspielräume für unterschiedliche Akteure ergeben.

Die künstlerische Beschäftigung mit den Dörfern und ihrer Geschichte löst die ökonomischen und strukturellen Probleme der Anwohner, die in dieser entlegenen Region leben, nicht. Es ist auch nicht das Anliegen der Kuratoren des Festivals, vergangene Geschichten nachzuerzählen. Sie suchen vielmehr nach neuen Lesarten der Landschaft und ihrer Räume, und tun dies, indem sie die relationalen Praktiken in den Vordergrund stellen und diese über einen län-



geren Zeitraum hinweg wachsen lassen. Bewegung macht die Lebendigkeit und Belebung der Häuser, Straßen und Dörfer aus, nicht die Kunst, die mal dauerhaft, mal temporär angelegt ist.

Es liegt den Kulturschaffenden daran, die Bedeutungen und Erfahrungen der Menschen zu erfassen und festzuhalten, und so rücken sie die peripheren Räume ins Zentrum ihrer Aufmerksamkeit.

Als ich Donatella besuchte, sprachen wir viel über den Stellenwert von Erinnerung. Sie zeigte sich enttäuscht darüber, dass viele junge Menschen heute kaum mehr Interesse an der Geschichte und nur wenige utopische Visionen hätten, und bereits der Terminus der Erinnerung sie abschrecken würde. Doch erzählte sie mir später im Gespräch, dass ihre Tochter nun seit einem Jahr in Topolò lebe. In einem Interview, das ihre Tochter einer lokalen Zeitung gab, schilderte diese, dass sie nicht nostalgisch einem Topolò hinterhertrauern möchte, das es nicht mehr gibt. Sie eignet sich das Dorf und die Strukturen, die es bietet, auf ihre eigene Weise an. Und das gemeinsam mit den anderen, verbliebenen oder neu hinzugekommenen Dorfbewohnern, denn, so erklärt mir Donatella, in einem Haus schläft man, im nächsten wird gekocht, und im dritten befindet sich das am besten ausgestattete Badezimmer. Internet gibt es wiederum in einem anderen Haus. Und so belebt man gemeinsam das ganze Dorf. Und zwar nicht, weil es notwendig ist, sondern aus einer bewussten Entscheidung heraus. Donatellas Tochter ist nur ein Beispiel dafür, dass es junge Menschen verstärkt in die Täler zieht.

Junge Kulturschaffende aus dem ganzen Friaul haben mittlerweile die Landschaft für ihre Ausstellungs- und Projektvorhaben entdeckt. Manche haben familiäre Verbindungen in diese Region, andere reizen vielmehr die leerstehenden Räumlichkeiten und Dörfer, die sie mit neuem Leben füllen, wie beispielsweise das Microfestival, ein Wanderfestival, das im Sommer mit mehreren Künstlern für 2 Wochen über die Dörfer im italienisch-slowenisch-österreichischen Grenzraum zieht. An diesem Festival partizipieren nicht nur Künstler, sondern vor allem die Menschen vor Ort, deren Geschichten als Hintergrundinformationen aufgenommen und in einem Online-Archiv gespeichert und zugänglich gemacht werden. Die Erzählungen bilden den Ausgangspunkt für die Performances. Schließlich wird das vor Ort erhobene Wissen gebündelt auf einer Website präsentiert, die als Archiv der Erzählungen fungiert. Dadurch dokumentiert und bewahrt das Projekt auch einen Teil des immateriellen Erbes. Das ist wiederum relevant, da finanzielle Ressourcen auf lokaler Ebene kaum vorhanden sind bzw. kaum in derlei Projekte investiert werden oder politisch gewollt sind.

Diese neuen Akteure verorten sich allerdings nicht nur »im Kontext von Migrationsgeschichten« (Wonisch 2012, 29). Durch neue Betrachtungen und Aneignungen von konfliktbehafteten Erinnerungen überschreiten sie mitunter die Grenzen des Erzählens über das etablierte Wissen. Dabei entwerten sie traditionelle Inhalte zwar nicht, eignen sich diese aber auf neuartige Weise an und generieren neue Formen und Inhalte. Dieser Umgang mit der Erinnerung an die Migration und ihre Folgen ermöglicht andere Perspektiven und Handlungsfelder, indem die Peripherie zu einem Zentrum der europäischen Imagination gemacht wird (vgl. Schönberger 2016). Die hier vorgestellten relationalen Praktiken der Raumaneignungen und -nutzungen können dazu beitragen, komplexe Dynamiken und Kontinuitäten von Konflikten aufzuzeigen, indem sie an alten Debatten und Konflikten anknüpfen und neue Herausforderungen und Möglichkeiten der Aushandlung thematisieren, denen sich unsere gegenwärtige Gesellschaft stellen sollte.

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## Border space in motion

### Artistic positions and relational appropriations of space

Janine Schemmer

The border area this article focusses on is located in Friuli, a region in the very northeast of Italy, bordering on Austria in the north and Slovenia in the northeast. Friuli was one of the venues of major European conflicts in the 20th century. The Valli del Natisone, the valleys of the river Natisone bordering Slovenia, were particularly affected by these conflicts: in the First World War the fronts ran on the mountains, there the battles were fought. In autumn 1943, the area became part of the German Occupational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, where Italian and Slovenian partisans and German occupiers faced each other. After the Second World War, the region played a central role as part of one of the front states in the Cold War, where ideological and geostrategic conflicts took place and military bases were established. Thus, this border area was strongly influenced by emigration, which is still anchored in the collective memory today. These conflicts have not only left traces of a material nature in the region and its landscape. They can also be related to in the narrations and everyday and artistic actions of different actors in the valleys, which I refer to in an exemplary manner in this article.

The focus is not on the experience of migration as a field of action, but rather in dealing with its consequences, such as depopulation, and their meanings for people and their living environment. The landscape in the valleys not only tells the story of conflicts, but also of the absence of people. Hence in the valleys of the Natisone it can be vividly understood »how global transformation processes [such as migration] are reflected in a local field of action« (Scholz-Irrlitz 2008, 8) and renegotiated in dynamic movements. While at the beginning of the 1950s about 18,000 people still lived in the villages, their number has fallen to about 6,000 today. Many vacant houses in the border area have filled up in recent years. Apart from remigrants and new immigrants from the surrounding regions, actors from the culture and art scene discovered the valleys for their projects. They bring new movements into the area and deal with conflicts and consequences such as migratory movements. In these processes, various approaches and positions can be identified, which develop different dynamics and can sometimes be traced back to the generational storages of the actors. The majority of them aim to preserve and pass on local culinary or agricultural traditions. Often, these actors remain in traditional narratives and open up little to new influences and developments. Coming from the villages and from



outside, others chance to question, scrutinise and possibly even transgress existing perspectives and cultural borders and their validity through their works.

One of these projects is the international cultural and art festival *Stazione Topolò*. It bears the name of the small village of Topolò, which belongs to the municipality of Grimacco, and has been held since 1994 each summer. Some of the performing artists stay in the village throughout the entire period, exploring the territory and related stories throughout their residence. This contribution deals with this form of mobility of artists, cultural workers and people interested in creative processes, which brings not only different actors but also the visitors of the festival to the remote villages. Furthermore, I focus on specific movements on site and on the (every-day) practices that have found their way into the villages and valleys with the festival and its participants.

My ethnographic work is based on informal conversations and interviews with residents and cultural workers from the valleys and the surrounding area, as well as on participant observation and field notes before and during the festival. For this contribution, I orient myself to the narratives of interlocutors, in particular one of the co-founders and curators of the festival *Stazione Topolò*. By means of this material, I approach the border demarcations and transgressions and thus the cultural and transnational movements and encounters taking place. How are the villages and the landscape perceived by the cultural workers and artists, and how do they use and interact with these spaces? And what kind of transgressions do these artistic approaches enable?

Space and landscape are subject to a constant process. Tim Ingold recommends taking a »dwelling perspective« when dealing with landscapes, hence paying increased attention to the local practices of actors and their impacts and effects on the spaces. He understands landscape as a permanent store of past material, but also of cultural developments that have left their marks. He emphasizes the relational context evoked by dealing with the landscape, which is characterised by the experiences of people and inhabitants and thus culturally shaped. Besides the built environment, the visible, also the invisible, the imagined shapes our utilisation and experience of space. It is an important part to read the material and cultural traces: »The landscape tells - or rather is - a story« (Ingold 1993, 152). And border landscapes contain history in a condensed form.

The initiators of the festival have made the examination of the landscape through direct access to it and its history a starting point. By physically experiencing and walking through a landscape in the form of a walk or a hike, it is possible to develop an understanding of the landscape and the stories that are inscribed in it, and to establish a relation to it. »Through walking, in short, landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape, in a process that is continuous and never-ending.« (Tilley, cited in Ingold 2004, 333). This close connection and interaction between man and landscape, cultural practices and forms is one of the starting points of the festival and everyday life on site.

Movement and mobility are already in the name of the festival: the *Stazione* primarily refers to the station, which is missing in the village. A station is a place where routes and paths cross, a place of arrival and departure, a place of transit. The name thus refers to the difficult peripheral location of the village. By creating references to urban space, the curators position the festival in an imaginary centre, overcome the peripheral location and place Topolò in the

focus of the action. With reference to urban locations and institutions, they transfer these to the countryside. However, city and country are not thought of as opposites. On the contrary, the *Stazione* overcomes these opposites and thus creates continuity and relation between these spaces.

Right from the start, the festival's programme was strongly oriented towards the appropriation of the landscape. The starting point for the festival was a reference to the village, its history and its eventful past. Donatella Rutar, one of the curators, says it is the perspective that is important in these discussions, with which one looks at the spaces and the stories inscribed in them: the focus is not on the border, which was once heavily armed and impenetrable, but on the idea of being in a centre in which new perspectives for the future (on site) are developed. The *Stazione Topolò* should not merely be understood as an exhibition venue, but rather as a process that picks up on material traces (for example through the extension and conversion of former residential and business premises), as well as on traces of an ideal, cultural and relational nature. These are being regrouped, reformed and newly articulated (see Braun 2006, 24). Thus, established narratives can be broken up and filled with new content.

One can observe that in this case, art is not exclusively seen or implemented as the engine for renewing the rural image or the infrastructure. It is not just about upgrading the area and attracting visitors. The organisers are concerned about a content-related and artistic confrontation with and exploration of past and present living environments and everyday lives in peripheral zones, and take a close look at landscapes that can be described as forgotten from various perspectives. Through the relational practices of appropriation and use of space presented in the article, such projects can contribute to highlighting complex dynamics and continuities of conflicts by building on old debates and addressing new challenges and opportunities for negotiations that our contemporary society should face.

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DOI: 10.25364/08.4:2018.I.II

**Extended Abstract of:**

Janine Schemmer, 'Border space in motion. Artistic positions and relational appropriations of space', *Mobile Culture Studies. The Journal* 4, 2018, 151-166. <<http://unipub.uni-graz.at/mcsj>>

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# Remaking a world:

## Recently displaced artists from Syria in Berlin

Charlotte Bank

- Abstract** Charlotte Bank vollzieht die Migration von Künstlerinnen und Künstlern aus dem Maghreb und Nahen Osten der letzten sieben Jahre nach. Nicht nur stehen sie einem anderen Publikum gegenüber, sondern müssen sie ihre Positionen inhaltlich und formal neu finden. Im Gespräch mit Künstlern, die den Weg von Syrien nach Berlin gefunden haben, hat die Autorin deren Umgang mit der neuen Situation ergründet und stellt einige ihrer Werke vor, die in Deutschland Aufmerksamkeit gefunden haben. Sie stellt fest, wie die Etikettierung von Werken der der betreffenden Künstler deren Auseinandersetzung mit der Gewalterfahrung zuwiderläuft. Sie plädiert für die empathische Öffnung europäischer Kunstinstitutionen für Bewegungen und Motive, die diesen Künstlern kreativen Raum lässt.
- Keywords** resistance, displacement, artistic idioms, representational politics, ethnic culturalism
- DOI** 10.25364/08.4:2018.1.12



Since the beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011, a considerable number of artists have taken their place among those displaced by the violence. In the early stages of the conflict, many chose to settle provisionally in other countries of the region, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt or Turkey, hoping to return soon to Syria. However, as the conflict wore on and the possibility of a quick solution diminished, most of these artists began to look for more permanent solutions. Beirut became home to some of the more established artists, who have chosen the city due to its status as one of the main artistic centres of the Arab world. In contrast, many early-career artists have sought to settle in Europe. Although many were drawn to Paris due to its traditional associations with art and its large number of Arab intellectual exiles, Berlin's cosmopolitan vibrancy and relatively liberal asylum policies also proved attractive.

As these artists move into new environments, they face numerous new concerns. Having previously worked under conditions of censorship in authoritarian Syria, they have developed ways to mediate aesthetic languages comprehensible to local audiences without encountering repression. In their new locations of residence, outside of this familiar albeit problematic terrain, they find themselves faced with the need of critically rethinking their previous practices. Unfamiliar institutional landscapes might also complicate a smooth integration into the local artistic and cultural scenes. Adding to this already complex situation, emotionally stressful situations and traumatic experiences encountered in Syria due to violence, war and flight can make a new beginning particularly difficult. Despite this, Syrian artists have proven apt at integrating into existing systems of representation and even initiating new spaces for work.

When the uprising began as a largely popular, revolutionary movement, many artists were at first hesitant to join in, at least as artists rather than activists. There was a widespread sentiment, that a certain temporal distance was needed in order to reflect on ongoing events. Examples of creative forms of protest and resistance appeared online soon after the beginning of the demonstrations in the streets, but these were mostly the work of groups of young activists.<sup>1</sup> However, starting from the middle of the year, works by professional artists also began to appear on various online platforms, bringing a new importance to the Internet as a space for artistic debates and the dissemination of critical works. The works uploaded online differed strongly from earlier forms of critical artistic production, as they were exceptionally frank in their articulation of critique of the Syrian regime. In many cases, artists chose to work anonymously in order to steer free of repercussions, or they hid their identities behind synonyms or collective names.<sup>2</sup> In these early works, denouncement of regime violence, solidarity with the peaceful protests and the call for citizen's rights, freedom and dignity were the central themes. And despite widespread violence encountered during the demonstrations, there remained an element of hope in these works, that justice would prevail in the end, and Syria become a free country. This hopeful attitude continued for some time, even after the formation of an armed resistance.

Yet, as the conflict wore on and became increasingly violent, this element of hope largely disappeared, and the distinctly activist character of art diminished. If artists had previously called directly for political change, they were now more and more preoccupied with themes of destruction, torture, flight and exile. And as increasing numbers of artists saw themselves forced to leave the country, they took these themes with them and brought them onto the international exhibition stage.

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1 See Al-Ghazzi 2014 for a discussion on digital media activism in the early months of the Syrian uprising.

2 For a discussion of some of these early works of artistic activism, see Bank 2014 and 2016.



Based on conversations with displaced Syrian artists in Berlin, in what follows I will discuss the impact of exile on the practice of these artists, how the conditions of displacement and exile impact on their perception of self and inform their work and how they navigate the institutional terrain of their new home.<sup>3</sup> I am largely concentrating on artists who work in contemporary media, such as video, installation and sound art. Berlin has also become host to a large number of artists who work in more traditional media, such as painting and drawing. Their situation might be slightly different, as they are possibly more likely to find representation in galleries and do not depend on the institutional framework of non-profit spaces, as the other artists do. On the other hand, the competitiveness of Berlin's gallery scene might present an imposing challenge for these artists as well.

Not all of the artists discussed here are very recently displaced, three of them already lived partially outside Syria before the war. However, due to the critical character of their work, they lost the possibility of going back to their country of origin, as they had been used to before. In this way, whether an artist is among those who have been recently displaced or they lived partly abroad before the war, Syria remains a lost place for the time being.

### **Making sense of displacement and exile**

Many artists were forced to leave Syria due to their political positioning against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Consequently, for those who came to Berlin, the city was first and foremost a secure haven, sometimes reached after considerable hardship and journeys full of perils. But despite this feeling of relief, the first period in the city has also in many cases been characterized by bureaucratic obstacles, something that has complicated a smooth new start. One important challenge has been the system of allocated places of residence for asylum seekers, as it is practiced in Germany. This functions through a central system and does not accommodate any individual preferences. As a consequence, a number of artists were obliged to move to small, provincial towns, far from Berlin and its relevant professional institutions and networks. In some cases, acquiring the assistance of a lawyer was the only way to prevent this significant setback of their careers. Others chose to take it upon them to move to the allocated towns, while returning to Berlin as soon as this became possible. Another important obstacle to artists' careers are those travel restrictions placed on asylum seekers, as long as their case is being processed. This might mean not being able to travel to attend exhibition openings and film festivals. For artists in need of building up new networks and reinforcing existing ones, this can present a serious setback to their careers.

Beside these professional issues, the tasks of getting organized in a new and foreign environment also present a significant challenge to the smooth integration into life in the new place of residence. For many artists, the status of "refugee" is perceived as frustrating and humiliating, as they feel unrepresented by mainstream society's image of the stereotypical refugee as a deindividualized, needy and miserable person. For artists who still wish to address the ongoing conflict in their home country and its high human and cultural costs, finding a way to balance this need without feeding into such essentialist notions of "the refugee" becomes a major concern.

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3 The research for this project was made possible by a postdoctoral fellowship of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, during which I was based at the Museum of Islamic Art from January – March 2018.



Balancing the desire to produce politically motivated work with individual artistic projects often means stepping through a minefield of possible traps. Yet, many displaced Syrian artists have chosen to hold on to themes related to war, torture, repression and violence. Their works offer visual expressions of the collective traumas that are haunting Syrians wherever they find refuge. As has been discussed by scholars of trauma-related art, such work has the potential of assisting the process of healing. An important step towards this aim lies in the articulation of traumatic experiences, as it allows victims to gain renewed agency and lead more empowered lives as survivors by allowing for an identification with the conceptual content of the works and relate it to personal experiences.<sup>4</sup>

In her discussion of South African artists' work related to the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Kim Miller used the Japanese concept of *hibakusha* to speak of the empowering significance of giving testimony. Usually employed in the context of witnesses/survivors of the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Second World War, a *hibakusha* is understood as a more than a witness, and rather as an empowered survivor who is giving testimony to his/her experiences and reject the notion of themselves as passive victims.<sup>5</sup> As Syrian displaced artists speak up about atrocities that all Syrians have been affected by and give voices to the victims of violence in their home country (who often cannot speak themselves), they actively take over the role of witnessing and bring testimonies onto the international cultural stage. Their works can produce the need among refugee communities to tell their own stories, to articulate their own traumatic experiences and thus offer an opportunity to take the first steps towards processing and, ultimately, to healing traumas.<sup>6</sup>

For the local, non-refugee audience, these works invite dialogues about the refugees' experiences and might thus help foster understanding and counter hostile sentiments. Jill Bennett describes trauma-related art as "transactive", rather than communicative, as it "touches us, but it does not necessarily communicate the 'secret' of personal experience". Drawing on Gilles Deleuze, Bennett states that feelings can function as catalysts for critical inquiry or deep thought, in the way they force us to engage involuntarily.<sup>7</sup> Yet, despite this undoubted potential, which can be observed at exhibitions, where audience members often appear profoundly touched by such works and seek to engage in conversations with the artists, the latter can easily become targets of hostilities.

A particularly dramatic example of this is the installation artist Manaf Halbouni. In February 2017, Halbouni created a public art work, *Monument*, on the square facing the "Frauenkirche" in the city of Dresden. The installation consisted of three buses, placed upright next to each other. It referred to measures taken by citizens in the Syrian city of Aleppo to protect themselves from snipers by creating shields of cars and buses. An image of this was captured by a young photographer and widely shared by international media.<sup>8</sup> For Halbouni, linking the fate of Aleppo with that of Dresden served a double purpose: he wanted to remind the audi-

4 See e.g. Hayes 2015 and Miller 2005, p. 42.

5 Miller 2005, p. 46.

6 For a discussion of the importance of witnessing in overcoming trauma, see Bennett 2005, p. 31.

7 Bennett 2005, p. 7.

8 Laurent 2015. Manaf Halbouni, [2017] *Monument*; [Manaf Halbouni], Kunstinstallation "Monument" 2017 <<http://www.kulturpaten-dresden.de/project/manaf-halbouni-transport-fuer-monument>>, [accessed 22nd May, 2018].

ences that just like Dresden with its landmark church had been reduced to rubble during World War II, so Syrian towns and cities were now being destroyed. At the same time, he wanted to add an element of hope, that Syrian towns and cities would be rebuilt and allowed to flourish, just like the city of Dresden and other German cities that were destroyed in the war.<sup>9</sup>

For visitors to the work, the massive impression made by three upright standing busses created an uncanny and disturbing sensation. As a first reaction, the busses appear threatening as they loom tall over the humans facing them or moving around them. But in Aleppo, a similar device had served as protection, by creating a safe space within which to move. The overwhelming size of the busses thereby echo the enormity of the violence they offered protection from. By linking three experiences from different periods and locations, i.e. the historical destruction of Dresden, the recent destruction of Aleppo and the present art work as experienced by the visitors, the work had all the potential to engender meaningful discussions. Through its juxtaposition of the Frauenkirche, the very symbol of Dresden's rebuilding with an iconic image of the destruction of Syria's cities and civic life, the work could have created connections between the local commemoration culture in Dresden, in which the trauma of the city's destruction in the final months of World War II occupies a major place and the contemporary trauma of Syria's destruction, that the refugee community is carrying with them and thereby create a more welcoming climate for the refugees.<sup>10</sup> However, this opportunity was largely lost due to violent demonstrations by right-wing protestors at the inauguration of the work. Through their shrill protests, a small group of hostile people managed to entirely hijack the event, at least at the time of its inauguration, and thereby foreclose any meaningful discussion of the sense of commemoration across history and how this might foster understanding between unrelated groups of people. However, the work and the controversy surrounding it led to wide press coverage, especially on the occasion of its restaging in Berlin in November 2017 and made it to one of the most publicized art works of that year.<sup>11</sup> As this example shows, balancing expectations from different audiences can easily prove particularly challenging, especially for artists working in the public space with its high level of diversity in terms of audiences and opinions.

Giving space to the articulation of traumatic, or at least disturbing and troubling memories was a major concern for another artist, Iman Hasbani. Her immersive installation, *Here, There, and Other Places* (2017)<sup>12</sup> revolved around a collection of oral accounts by young Syrian women, now living in Berlin. Over the course of three months the artist conducted workshop-like sessions with the women, during which they told and recorded their experiences of flight and exile, of loss and of hope. The duration of the project and the informal character of

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9 Halbouni [2017], <<https://www.manaf-halbouni.com/work/monument>> [accessed 10th June 2018].

10 The literature on the bombing of Dresden in February 1945 is abundant. For a discussion of commemoration discourse surrounding the firebombing of Dresden, see e.g. Hoelscher 2012, for a discussion of the controversies surrounding the event, see e.g. Biddle 2008.

11 See e.g. Trilling, Benjamin. 2017. 'Skulptur „Monument“ in Berlin: Kontroverse erwünscht', taz 10.11. 2017, <<http://www.taz.de/!5461717>>; must read Peitz, Christiane. 2017. 'Krieg und Kunst Aleppo in Berlin', Der Tagesspiegel 9.11. 2017 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/krieg-und-kunst-aleppo-in-berlin/20564422.html>; Quinn, Annalisa. 2017. 'A monument to Syria's civil war is erected in Berlin', New York Times, 13.11. 2017 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/arts/design/berlin-monument-syria-manaf-halbouni.html>>, all accessed 10th June 2018.

12 Presented in March 2017 at Art-Lab Berlin im iPhonedoctor in collaboration with Shubbak Festival, London, <<https://artlabberlin.wordpress.com/2017/03/09/here-there-and-other-places-2>> [accessed 10th June 2018]



the sessions enabled the development of a climate of mutual trust and confidence, a factor that also informed the final shape of the art work. Hasbani created a tunnel-like device made out of soft, white fabric that was kept flowing through the means of several small table ventilators. The room, in which the installation was staged, was kept in a soft light. Inside the tunnel, loudspeakers were placed at four places from which the accounts of the women were heard, in Arabic and Kurdish. Visitors to the space were asked to remove their shoes and enter into the tunnel, crawling on all fours and engage with the narrated stories by lying down close to the loudspeakers. The narratives were kept in their original languages of Arabic and Turkish and resumes in German and English were provided to be consulted before or after entering the tunnel. Even though the majority of the visitors were unfamiliar with the original languages, the soft voices of the women and the knowledge of the content of their accounts led many to spend considerable time inside the tunnel, which became a kind of cocoon-like, protective space for reflection and intimate engagement with the narratives.

If Hasbani's *Here, There, and Other Places* sought to create a safe space for encounters between the participants' narrations and the visitors, two works have addressed the loss of safety and the disintegration of the sense of security normally associated with domestic space. Rula Ali's *Chairing* (2016) consists of a room with two chairs standing opposite each other. The upholstery of the chairs is in shreds and shredded fabric also covers the entire floor, the radiator and the ceiling lamp.<sup>13</sup> The former comfort of the carefully and lovingly decorated home, witnessed by the elegant chairs and their fabric, has turned into its opposite. For all we know, the room might have witnessed an unknown disaster. In a similarly unsettling way, Khaled Barakeh's *On the Ropes* (2015, recreated in 2018) presents the viewer with an entire floating living room, each piece of furniture hanging on thin plastic cords and moving slowly.<sup>14</sup> The effect is one of profound anxiety and instability, conditions often associated with exilic existence. Visitors to Ali's and Barakeh's works enter the spaces not fully knowing what to expect. Both installations appear to present the results of some unknown and unsettling event and an unseen danger might still be lurking somewhere in these rooms.

In the discussed works, the body of the spectator/visitor becomes part of the art work and their importance as articulations of collective trauma with the potential to evoke an empathic reaction in the spectators relies on this interaction. In *Monument*, the overwhelming size of the barrier confronts the visitors with their own helplessness. In *Here, There, and Other Places*, the visitors need to engage physically with the work by entering the "tunnel" in order to get close to the voices (rather than the content) of the women narrating their stories. *Chairing* and *On the Ropes* both draw the visitor into their destabilizing spaces and upset all sense of groundedness. Viewed from afar, these works lose much of their affective capacities.

Other artists have approached the theme of trauma differently and taken the bodily distance of the viewer into account. Works in more traditional media such as painting, drawing

13 Video <<https://www.facebook.com/taqwa.ali.79/videos/1015883428493498>> [accessed 10th June 2018].

14 Barakeh, Khaled. [2018]. Video On the Ropes 2015, installation <<https://khaledbarakeh.com/on-the-ropes.html>> [accessed 10th June 2018]. Re-staged May 12, 2018 at Art-Lab Berlin. 2018. Exhibition views "In-Between. Rethinking Transcultural Identities" <https://artlabberlin.wordpress.com/2018/05/12/exhibition-views-in-between-rethinking-transcultural-identities> [accessed 10th June 2018].

and sculpture engage the viewers differently. Yaser Safi mainly works with drawings and etchings. While some of his work explore scenes of street life or sports, many images address themes of violence, torture and rape. In these images, populated by mutilated and distorted bodies, it is sometimes difficult to clearly distinguish between the victim and the perpetrator. Thereby the small scale of the drawings and the ephemeral character of the motifs, often depicted in a way that recalls shadows, stands in stark contrast to the disturbing content of these images. Since his arrival in Berlin in 2015, Safi has produced a large number of these works, almost to the point of obsession. As one of the most successful Syrian artists in Berlin, he has participated in several exhibitions in the city and appears to have succeeded in creating conversations about Syria and the violence in the country through around his works. But while these images appear to present as profound need for the artist, he has also confirmed his freedom to choose his subject matter according to his own tastes.<sup>15</sup>

For the video artist, filmmaker and conceptual artist Ammar Al-Beik, the boundaries between his personal life and the broader political and social context, within which he lives and moves are constantly broken down and renegotiated. For Al-Beik, the notion that “the personal is political” holds very real implications. At the very beginning of the Syrian revolt, he was following events as they unfolded, documenting online activism, while combining this found material with his own images to create multi-layered statements in support of the nascent movement for freedom in the Arab world. In his video, *Hadinat al-shams (The Sun’s Incubator, 2011)*, which premiered at the International Film Festival Venice in 2011, the birth of the artist’s daughter is interwoven with the torture and death of a young boy, Hamza Al-Khatib. Hamza Al-Khatib was one of the first prominent child victims of the Syrian uprising, who was arrested for participating in anti-regime protests and tortured to death. His mutilated body, which was returned to his family after his death, was filmed and uploaded onto YouTube by activists as a cry for help in the face of atrocities and blunt violence.<sup>16</sup>

Watching with increasing incredulousness and shock as these disturbing images intrude upon their private world via international TV coverage, Al-Beik and his wife are witnessing the unsettling of their world, in which the care for their new-born baby is of central importance. In a desperate attempt to cope rationally with the situation, Al-Beik films himself getting ready to join the protests, carrying his baby with him. But rationality and civil responsibility seems to have lost their effects, demonstrations, care and witnessing are elements of an ongoing cycle that the video refuses to bring to a halt, hope mingles with despair. In a later work, *La Dolce Siria (2014)*, which premiered at the Forum Expanded section of the Berlinale festival in 2015, this initial, if fragile, element of hope is gone.

The work is a video collage that use a vast amount of archive material from different sources and found footage. In a fragmented, non-linear narrative style, Al-Beik presents a bitter settlement with the brutality of the Syrian regime. Danger and violence permeates the entire 26:51 minutes of the video. While the aggressivity of the regime resonates in footage of a circus lion attacking its trainer (the parallel of Syrian president’s name “Assad”, which means “lion” in Arabic and the actual lion is lost on no informed viewer), even a scene of playful domesticity in which two small boys are carrying a film camera holds a latent danger. The boys are too small

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15 See Hugill, undated interview with Yaser Safi.

16 The case received wide international media coverage. See e.g. Stack 2011.



to handle the heavy instrument, which could fall onto their naked feet at any moment and the constant sound of fighter aircraft that sometimes seem to take over control of the images serves as another reminder of the ever-present violence. By cleverly manipulating sound and image and juxtaposing footage of diverse sources as if it was closely related, Al-Beik creates a dystopian realm, where no space is safe and the border between truth and fake has become porous. Through its combination of documentary, fiction and commentary, the video is also a self-reflexive examination of the power of images.

If the two videos, *The Sun's Incubator* and *La Dolce Siria* directly address the political situation in Syria, a more recent work, *@Certified Copy*, is a reflection of memory and arrival. The work takes the form of an installation presented on the four walls of a room.<sup>17</sup> Strongly autobiographical, the work offers multiple narrative lines related to Al-Beik's artistic beginnings in Damascus, the process of developing a new life for himself in Berlin and his ongoing passion for cinema and its history. Since his arrival in the city, Al-Beik has documented the various aspects of his daily life in his new environment, taking photos and recording videos in the refugee shelter, when dealing with bureaucracy, but also when walking through the streets of Berlin, working in cafés or visiting the flea market. These aspects all feed into the installation. Official papers documenting the long processes of German asylum-related bureaucracy, text snippets from anti-racist posters and flyers are part of it, as are thrift-store finds and objects found on the streets of the city. Intersected with these elements are references to the artist's films and videos and homages to his own, personal icons, such as the film directors Wim Wenders and Jean-Luc Godard and football player Diego Maradona. The result is a net or kaleidoscope of aspects of Al-Beik's works that allows for multiple cross-readings. *@Certified Copy* is a work that needs time to engage with. It invites the visitor to enter the mindscape of the artists, to find individual links and points of reference. This immersive aspect connects it to projects such as *Monument*, *Here, There, and Other Places*, *Chairing*, and *On the Ropes*, discussed above. But while those works dealt with the traumas of war and flight, Ammar Al-Beik's installation presents a step out of such troubled states of mind and onto a new trajectory, one that still might seem overwhelming due to its many possible paths, but also one that offer new spaces to explore and test.

### Visibility and the politics of representation

The Syrian artists discussed above have all found exhibition opportunities at different established art institutions and project spaces in Berlin. They have profited from an institutional infrastructure that has become significantly more accommodating for non-Western artists and have also pro-actively initiated new spaces, such as e.g. the project *Damascus in Exile*. A collaboration between the Goethe Institute and a group of Syrian artists, it took place in a pop-up gallery in the Mitte neighbourhood in the fall of 2016 and presented a program of film screenings, performances, readings and talks over a period of seven weeks.<sup>18</sup> An earlier initiative was the project *Kunststoff Syrien*, initiated by a group of Berlin-based Syrians, which took place in

17 Presented in 2018 at Art-Lab Berlin, "Asphalt Jungles" exhibition views, June 15, 2018 <<https://artlabberlin.wordpress.com/2018/06/15/asphalt-jungles-exhibition-views/>> [accessed 10th June 2018]

18 Goethe-Institut Berlin. 2016. Damaskus im Exil | Theme Space "Syria-Berlin", <<https://www.goethe.de/en/uun/ver/dix.html>> [accessed 10th June 2018].

2012 and 2014 as a reaction to the war.<sup>19</sup> But apart from these initiatives that were launched with the specific purpose of presenting art and culture from Syria, it has been the many smaller non-profit project spaces that are characteristic of Berlin's art scene that have offered opportunities for Syrian artists and included them in their regular programming.<sup>20</sup> This has given the new arrivals possibilities to exhibit together with other artists, who are already established in Berlin and to interact with diverse audiences. In this way, it has enabled the artists to get a foot in the door of the highly competitive art scene of the German capital. But regardless of such positive beginnings, there still remains a number of important caveats that I will outline in what follows.

Despite the so-called "global turn" of the international art world since the 1990s, artists, and particularly those from non-Western countries, are often affiliated with their places of origin and expected to represent a particular cultural identity. Works by Middle Eastern artists are often presented according to an alleged uniformity of the socio-cultural and political sphere of this vast region, that entirely disregards its diversity. One example of this tendency is the ubiquity of themes related to religious culture, especially practices of "veiling", that have been common in exhibitions of contemporary Middle Eastern art.<sup>21</sup>

For Middle Eastern artists living in the West, the need to present a less essentializing picture of their cultural background becomes pertinent. Like all other migrants, these artists are faced with the reductive, ethnic-culturalist definitions of migration that still prevail in mainstream cultural debates.<sup>22</sup> However, the wish to counter stereotypical reductionism easily risk reducing their work to "reactions", rather than active productions. Expected to conform to a particular cultural identity, they are often called upon to "explain" aspects of their countries of origin to Western audiences through their work, placing an emphasis on educational aspects rather than artistic ones.<sup>23</sup> That the multifaceted subtleties of the art works are at great risk to be lost in this process goes without saying. Yet success as artists might mean actively engaging with such expectations and balancing them, while developing strategies to steer free of exploitation.

For newly arrived Syrian artists, balancing the expectations of the local art scene with their own combined desires to produce work according to their own inclinations and establish themselves as professional artists, remains challenging. Syrian artists in Berlin are still relatively sought after due to Syria's regular presence in the news, but also because audiences remain interested in the fate of the country and its people. For the art scene and market, this is an asset. Simultaneously, the need to re-establish their careers in Berlin leads Syrian artists to actively seek out opportunities to engage with the artistic infrastructure, whether through exhibitions, talks or other forms of participation in events. In their (understandable) eagerness to participate in the city's art scene, there is a considerable danger of becoming trapped in a cycle of producing

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19 Kulturvertretung. 2014. KunstStoff Syrien 2014. das non-profit-project 29. März – 8. April 2014, Berlin <<http://www.kulturvertretung.de/kunststoff-syrien/kunststoff-syrien>> [accessed accessed 10th June 2018].

20 Examples are: Art-Lab Berlin <<https://artlabberlin.wordpress.com>>, Bi'bak: <<http://bi-bak.de>>, Box-Freiraum: <<http://www.box-freiraum.berlin>>, Kurt-Kurt: <<http://www.kurt-kurt.de>>.

21 See e.g. Nahidi 2013, p. 210 for a discussion of this issue. Behiery 2012 examines a series of very different projects related to the practice of "veiling" and discusses how such works deconstruct and counter mainstream discourses around the "veil".

22 Hess 2013, p. 110, 114.

23 See Naef 2010, pp. 487 – 489 for observations on exhibitions of Iraqi artists in the West.



the particular kind of art, that audiences and institutions have come to associate with “Syrian art” and thereby neglect exploring new themes and further develop their practice. When the scene becomes saturated with this kind of “war art”, as it inevitably will at some point, these artists risk disappearing from attention.

For this reason, it remains vital that artists continue to develop and re-think their practice, while actively engaging with the art scene of their new “home” city and expand their professional networks. As examples from other displaced artists’ communities such as German artists fleeing the Nazi regime have shown, networks have a decisive importance to secure a continued existence as professional artists.<sup>24</sup> The Syrian displaced artists who have arrived in Berlin in the past few years have been lucky enough to find a considerable number of artists from other Arab countries who have been able to help during the initial period of getting settled and organized as artists. Staying connected among themselves without neglecting interaction with the wider cultural field can also help Syrian displaced artists to re-gain and keep their voices. Besides the small-scale, temporary projects referred to above, the artist Khaled Barakeh is developing an online platform that will be launched in 2019 and aims to be “website that, on the one hand, functions as a gallery, on the other serves as a creativity hub for opportunities and support. It works as a reference, mapping, sharing and networking platform as well as an event-database, culture indexing archive, an integration and business accelerator”.<sup>25</sup>

For Syrian artists in Berlin many doors seem open at present, mainly within the alternative scene of non-profit project spaces and initiatives. The larger museums have up till now not hosted an exhibition of works by displaced Syrian artists, however, events involving young artists who are continuing their training at the city’s art schools have taken place.<sup>26</sup> The coming years will be of crucial importance for these artists to establish themselves with a lasting presence in the city’s art scene.

### Concluding remarks

The Syrian artists who have been forced from their homes by the war and come to Berlin is the most recent group of intellectual exiles in the city. Compared to earlier groups of non-Western artists to arrive in the city, they have found a more diverse art scene and one that has proven considerably more open to newcomers. The artists discussed in this article have all found opportunities to present their work and engage with the existing artistic infrastructure in various ways. While this is undoubtedly positive, there is a high risk that these artists will be forgotten, once the excitement over the novelty of their presence in the city is over. The question remains how this can be prevented. How can Syrian artists secure their continued existence as professional artists? Of course, not only Syrian artists struggle to stay afloat and earn their living as artists. But for non-Western artists, the reductive practice of “labelling” that is common in the international art world is often experienced as particularly stifling. For many Syrian

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24 See Dogramaci 2011 for a discussion of the importance of networks for displaced and exiled artists.

25 coculture. Syria Cultural Index. Creative database <<http://coculture.de/syria-cultural-index.html>> [accessed 10th June 2018].

26 See e.g. Carpe Diem! 2018. Performance “Revising Revisited” 23.6. 2018 <<http://berlin.carpediem.cd/events/7142675-performance-revising-revisited-at-hamburger-bahnhof-museum-f-r-gegenwart-berlin>> [accessed 10th June 2018].

artists, the political situation in their home country continues to play an important role in their work. At the same time, this kind of work is often what audiences and institutions seem to expect them to produce. There is just a fine line between producing such work out of a personal wish and doing it based on such expectations and as this might secure one continued exhibition opportunities and increased exposure.

In order to break free of such limits, non-Western artists need institutions that allow them to present their work, without sensationalism, regardless of news headlines and on a regular basis. Institutions in which research-based exhibitions and projects involving non-Western art would ensure a continued presence of these artists, eventually leading to them becoming an integrated part of the art scene of the city.

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