

NR. 66 // SEPTEMBER 2019

POSITIONIERUNGE 'KRITISCHE' WÖRTER AUF DIE 'FLÜCHTLINGSKRISE' IN KUNST UND LITERATUR

TAKING POSITIONS ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS: CRITICAL RESPONSES IN ART AND LITERATURE

FKW //

NR. 66 // SEPTEMBER 2019

POSITIONIERUNGEN. KRITISCHE ANTWORTEN AUF
DIE ‚FLÜCHTLINGSKRISE‘ IN KUNST UND LITERATUR
*TAKING POSITIONS ON THE ‘REFUGEE CRISIS’:
CRITICAL RESPONSES IN ART AND LITERATURE*

003–004 // **FKW-Redaktion**
EDITORIAL

005–026 // **Kea Wienand & Liesbeth Minnaard**
EINLEITUNG / INTRODUCTION

ARTIKEL

027–042 // **Sabine Nielsen**
STUCK BETWEEN DESTINATIONS: REFLECTIONS ON PEJK MALINOVSKI'S VIRTUAL REALITY PROJECT *THIS ROOM*

043–054 // **Claire E. Jandot**
ESCAPING THE ECHO CHAMBER: PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRANT REPRESENTATIONS IN THE EXHIBITION SPACE

055–071 // **Sven Seibel**
STIMME GEBEN, GEHÖR VERLEIHEN. KOLLABORATIVE DOKUMENTATIONEN UND DIE BEDINGUNGEN DER VERNEHMBARKEIT VON
MIGRATION UND FLUCHT

072–086 // **Janna Houwen**
VIDEO AGAINST THE MACHINE: LENS-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN THE REFUGEE CRISIS

087–100 // **Martha Bouziouri**
DRAMATURGIES OF THE ‘OTHER’: SELF-MAKING & SENSE-MAKING IN CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

101–117 // **Sarah Beeks**
ILJA LEONARD PFEIJFFER AS A LUXURY IMMIGRANT: A EUROPEAN PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL AND THE ‘REFUGEE CRISIS’

EDITION

118 // **Hannimari Jokinen**
GREENER PASTURES (2015–2019)

119–124 // **Kea Wienand**
HANNIMARI JOKINEN, *GREENER PASTURES* (2015–2019)

REZENSIONEN

125–130 // **Veronika Schöne**
KHALED BARAKEH: DIE BLAUE STUNDE (16.11.18–13.01.19, MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE HAMBURG)

131–136 // **Katharina Hoffmann & Verena Hücke**
REZENSION ZU: RASS, CHRISTOPH/ULZ, MELANIE (HG.) (2018): MIGRATION EIN BILD GEBEN. VISUELLE AUSHANDLUNGEN VON
DIVERSITÄT. WIESBADEN, VS.

EDITORIAL

Liebe Leser*innen,

der sogenannte *Sommer der Migration* liegt mittlerweile vier Jahre zurück. Weiterhin erreichen uns Nachrichten über gescheiterte Fluchtversuche, über Ertrunkene im Mittelmeer, über Rettungsschiffe mit Geflüchteten, die keine Einfahrerlaubnis in europäische Häfen erhalten, oder über die desolaten Situationen in Unterkünften und Lagern für Asylsuchende. Zugleich scheint der öffentliche Diskurs immer deutlicher von einer Rede über eine ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ dominiert zu sein, die suggeriert, Europa würde von Immigrant*innen ‚überrollt‘, wodurch Leben und Werte hierzulande bedroht seien. Nicht selten werden dabei Gleichberechtigung und Schutz von allen Geschlechtern sowie Sexualitäten als Grund angeführt, um sich gegen eine vermeintliche Invasion von jenen zu wehren, denen man diese Werte abspricht. Viele Kulturinstitutionen, Kulturschaffende und Intellektuelle haben sich daraufhin den Themen rund um Flucht und Migration angenommen. Während dieses Engagement einerseits begrüßenswert ist, erschien es uns andererseits gerade aus einer queerfeministischen und kulturwissenschaftlichen Perspektive notwendig, zu fragen, was es konkret bedeutet, *kritisch* angesichts der Rede über eine ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ zu sein. Die Beiträge der 66. Ausgabe von *FKW//Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur* nehmen sich dieser Fragen an und diskutieren Projekte aus dem Bereich der bildenden Kunst, des Dokumentarfilms, der Literatur und des Theaters.

Wir bedanken uns ganz herzlich bei allen Autor*innen und bei der Künstlerin Hannimari Jokinen für die Edition. Bei Steven Lindberg bedanken wir uns für die Übersetzung der Einleitung und bei Fabian Brunke von Zwo.Acht für die Gestaltung!

Für die nächsten Ausgaben sind folgende Themen geplant:

Die Winterausgabe 2019 widmet sich Fragen aktueller feministischer Strategien in der Performance-Kunst, die mit ihren vielschichtigen Praktiken des Verkörperns im öffentlichen Raum an die Anfänge feministischer Performances in den 1970er-Jahren (EXPORT; Lacy, Piper, u.v.a.) zurückdenken, zugleich aber auch erkennen lassen, dass sie keine bloße Neuauflage von Performancegeschichte(n) sind. Weniger geht es dabei um kunstbetriebsimmanente Fragen des Reenactments als vielmehr um Formen der (Re-)Aktualisierung von kritischen Praxen.

003

Es bleibt dabei, Handeln als ein bedingtes Handeln in Bezug auf den Körper zu verstehen. Im Blickwechsel zwischen Konzepten und Rezeptionen der *Gründungsjahre* und aktuellen Arbeiten sucht die Ausgabe nach einer Differenzierung von Fragestellungen – back and forth. Herausgegeben wird die 67. Ausgabe von Sigrid Adorf und der Gastredakteurin Sabine Gebhardt-Fink (Hochschule Luzern).

Das für Sommer 2020 geplante Heft Nr. 68 beschäftigt sich unter dem Titel *Hard-pressed – Textilien und Aktivismus, 1990–2020* mit aktivistischen Formen von Handarbeit, sei dies bezogen auf Kunst, politische Proteste oder wissenschaftliche Diskurse. Die neuesten Ausprägungen des Textilen als dem *Anderen* gegenüber dem Etablierten machen es notwendig, die politische Aufladung und künstlerische Überformung textiler Handarbeit sowohl im musealen *white cube* als auch im öffentlichen Stadtraum eingehend zu diskutieren. Inwiefern bietet sich das Textile als Protestform gegen aktuelle Regierungs-, Wirtschafts- und Sozialsysteme sowie vorherrschende Geschlechterordnungen an? Und inwiefern kann die intendierte Kritik etwa an Vorstellungen von Arbeit oder an binären Vorstellungen von Geschlecht überhaupt wirksam werden? Zusammengestellt wird die Sommer-Ausgabe *Hard-pressed* von den Gastherausgeberinnen Leena Crasemann und Anne Röhl.

Zu guter Letzt müssen wir uns leider noch von zwei Redakteurinnen verabschieden: Nach langjähriger, freundschaftlicher und produktiver Zusammenarbeit haben Maike Christadler und Hildegard Frübis unsere Redaktion verlassen. Damit gehen zwei unserer erfahrensten Kolleginnen, deren Forschungen grundlegend für die deutschsprachige feministische Kunstwissenschaft sind. Beide gehören zu den ersten Wissenschaftlerinnen, die eine feministische und intersektionale Perspektive auf die Kunstgeschichtsschreibung gerichtet und mit ihren Forschungen die Produktivität einer solchen Ausrichtung auch für die kunsthistorische Forschung zu Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit bewiesen haben. Das Spektrum ihrer jeweiligen Forschungsgebiete ist breit und wir sind froh, dass sie uns als Autorinnen, Mitdenkerinnen und Unterstützerinnen weiter verbunden bleiben. Wir bedanken uns herzlich für ihr besonderes Engagement als Herausgeberinnen und Redakteurinnen sowie für ihre kreative und stets kritische feministische Perspektive, mit der sie die Redaktionsarbeit von FKW wesentlich getragen haben.

Wir wünschen eine anregende Lektüre!

EINLEITUNG //

POSITIONIERUNGEN. KRITISCHE ANTWORTEN AUF DIE ,FLÜCHTLINGSKRISE‘ IN KUNST UND LITERATUR

Mit den jüngst angestiegenen globalen Flucht- und Migrationsbewegungen¹⁾ sowie den gleichzeitigen massiven Versuchen, die Zuwanderungen in den globalen Norden zu verhindern, sind zahlreiche Bilder, Begriffe und Narrationen produziert worden, die diese Ereignisse und ihre Akteure erfassen und vermitteln sollen. Viele dieser Repräsentationen stellen die Migrierenden als Verdächtige dar und verbildlichen die Grenzüberschreitungen als unkontrollierbar. In Verdacht geraten sind dabei aber auch die Repräsentationen von Flucht und illegaler Migration selbst. In vielen verschiedenen europäischen Ländern wurde diese Bilder begleitet von Diskussionen über deren Angemessenheit, moralische Zulässigkeit und gesellschaftspolitische Funktionen. Weniger reflektiert wird die Art und Weise, in der Formen der Sichtbarmachung und Unsichtbarmachung bzw. Hörbarmachung und das Zum-Schweigen-Bringen von Migration und Flucht selbst teilweise auch Techniken repressiver Migrationsregimes und ausschließender Praktiken sind. In die aktuelle europäische Migrationspolitik sind Formen der Un/Sicht- und Un/Hörbarmachung von Grenzüberschreitungen tief eingelassen. Nicht jede Form von Un/sichtbarkeit oder Un/hörbarkeit ist dementsprechend als per se *kritisch* zu verstehen, sondern sollte auf ihre Aussagen und Effekte sowie auf mögliche Ausschlüsse und Fortschreibungen befragt werden. Spätestens seit 2015 wird im künstlerischen Bereich, aber auch in der Populär- und Medienkultur, versucht, *kritische* Reflexionen von Darstellungsweisen und *alternative* Formen der Verbildlichung oder Erzählung von Flucht und Migration zu finden. Gesucht werden *neue* Darstellungsparameter und Bildformeln, die sich den kriminalisierenden Diskursen über Terrorismus und Bedrohung verweigern und dem überaus präsenten und immer auch geschlechtlich kodierten Topos des Opfers entkommen. Aber *wie* sollen diese *neuen* oder *anderen* Visualisierungen und Narrationen eigentlich aussehen, und was wird heutzutage, in einem von diversen ‚Krisen‘ heimgesuchten Europa, eigentlich als *kritisch* und *progressiv* verstanden? Wie antworten und positionieren sich Künstler*innen, Schriftsteller*innen, Filmemacher*innen sowie generell Kulturschaffende und Intellektuelle gegenüber den Diskursen um die sogenannte ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘?

1) Wir verwenden im Folgenden verschiedene Begriffe, um die Personen und ihre unterschiedlichen Flucht- bzw. Migrationsbewegungen zu benennen. Auch den Autor*innen haben wir es selbst überlassen, für ihre Texte geeignete Termini auszuwählen. Ähnlich wie Sabine Hess u.a. (2017: 6) es formuliert haben stehen wir einer Forschung, die die verschiedenen Personen, Bewegungen und Motivationen in engen Kategorien und Statistiken denkt, kritisch gegenüber. Vielmehr schließen wir uns Positionen an, die darauf verweisen, dass all diese Terminologien auch staatliche Erfindung sind (De Genova 2017: 8), mit denen diejenigen, die Grenzen überqueren, markiert und reguliert werden (s. dazu Carastathis u.a. 2018: 4).

— Angesichts der sich zunehmend verhärtenden Debatten und der vehementen Forderungen nach einer stärkeren Abschottung Europas schien es uns dringend notwendig, diese Fragen zu stellen – und zwar aus einer explizit kulturwissenschaftlichen sowie queerfeministischen und postkolonialen Perspektive. Eine solche Perspektive denkt zum Einen mit, dass die Erfahrungen beim (illegalisierten) Überschreiten von Grenzen extrem unterschiedlich sein können, je nachdem wie die Einzelnen in den Hierarchien von Gender, Rassisierung, Klasse, Alter, Religion und Sexualität als Subjekte positioniert sind (s. dazu auch Catastathis u.a. 2017: 6). Zum Anderen bezieht sie mit ein, dass auch die Repräsentationen, d.h. das Reden über und Visualisierungen von Flucht und Migration durch geschlechtliche und rassisierte Stereotype und Vorannahmen durchzogen sind und ihre Effekte auf die Realität haben. Anliegen unseres Vorhabens war es nicht, eine abschließende einheitliche Antwort zu finden, vielmehr ging es uns darum, diese Diskussion anzustoßen bzw. sich in diese Debatten von einer intersektionalen Perspektive aus einzumischen.

— Als Ausgangspunkt für diese Diskussion haben wir Chantal Mouffes in verschiedenen Publikationen dargestellten agonistischen Ansatz vorgeschlagen (2007 und 2014). Grundlegend für diesen Ansatz ist eine Gesellschaftsvorstellung, die sie mit Ernesto Laclau entwickelt und verschiedentlich publiziert hat (z.B. 1985/2006). In dieser radikal anti-essentialistischen Sichtweise gilt jegliche gesellschaftliche Ordnung als Produkt von hegemonialen Praktiken bzw. von Machtverhältnissen (2014: 21ff.). Laut Mouffe sind gesellschaftliche Ordnungen immer das Ergebnis von Aushandlungsprozessen (in denen auch Emotionen und Affekte eine Rolle spielen) und den sich dabei etablierenden Hegemonien. Jede gesellschaftliche Ordnung basiert in diesem Verständnis auf dem Ausschluss anderer Möglichkeiten (ebd.: 22) und kann daher durch antihegemoniale Praktiken infrage gestellt werden. Mouffe argumentiert damit gegen die liberalistische Vorstellung von einem universellen und vernunftbasierten Konsens, der sich idealerweise in einer Gesellschaft erreichen ließe (ebd.: 24). Vielmehr versteht sie jede Gesellschaft als eine von unauflösbaren Antagonismen, d.h. von unüberbrückbaren Gegensätzen durchzogene.

— Ihr Ansatz will dem konstitutiven Charakter dieser gesellschaftlichen Gegensätze und den daraus resultierenden Konflikten nicht aus dem Weg gehen oder diese auflösen, sondern ihnen *ins Auge sehen* (ebd.: 38f.). Das Politische versteht sie insofern als Streit um Hegemonie zwischen einzelnen unter-

schiedlichen Positionen. Mouffe schlägt vor, dass die Antagonismen zu Agonismen werden sollen, d.h. dass aus unterschiedlichen Positionen keine Gegner, keine Feinde, werden, sondern Opponenten, die miteinander in Diskussion treten. In Abgrenzung zu Ansätzen, die den öffentlichen Raum als ein Terrain beschreiben, auf dem man einen Konsens herzustellen sucht, versteht sie diesen als einen Ort, an dem konfligierende Sichtweisen aufeinandertreffen, ohne dass eine Versöhnung wünschenswert oder überhaupt möglich wäre (ebd.: 142). Bei aller Skepsis gegenüber jüngeren Entwicklungen der postfordistischen Ökonomie und der Vereinnahmung von ästhetischen Strategien der Gegenkultur in eine kapitalistische Ordnung sieht sie auf dem Feld der Kunst eine besondere Möglichkeit, einen agonistischen öffentlichen Raum zu schaffen. Demnach wäre kritische Kunst eine Kunst, die Dissens anfacht. Kritische künstlerischer Praktiken würden Alternativen zu den etablierten Sichtweisen bzw. zum Common Sense eröffnen (ebd.: 143 und 2007: 4). Dabei geht es nicht lediglich um die Dekonstruktion von hegemonialen Sichtweisen und Annahmen oder um einen simplen Pluralismus von Positionen, sondern um die Initiierung von Räumen, in denen die Hegemonie offen angegriffen werden kann (ebd.: 153). Kritische Kunst würde es laut Mouffe möglich machen, vorhandene Agonismen zu unterstreichen, um u.a. mit ästhetischen Erfahrungen die Hegemonie infrage zu stellen (ebd.: 156).

— Die vorliegende Ausgabe von *FKW* mit dem Titel *Positionierungen. Kritische Antworten auf die ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ in Kunst und Literatur* kann selbst als ein Ort verstanden werden, in dem eine kontroverse Auseinandersetzung möglich wird, aber auch als ein Ort, von dem aus Hegemonie infrage gestellt werden kann. Aufgefordert waren unsere Autor*innen, die jeweiligen künstlerischen Arbeiten oder Positionen darauf zu befragen, inwiefern, d.h. ob und wenn ja, *wie* sie *kritisch* sind und *wie* konkret sie in hegemoniale Ordnungen, hier vor allem in dominante Repräsentationen von Flucht und ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘, intervenieren. Alle der versammelten Aufsätze und Rezensionen diskutieren, inwiefern den einzelnen Projekten dies gelingt, welche Schwierigkeiten oder Ambivalenzen dabei entstehen und wo vermeintlich gut gemeinte Vorhaben den scheinbaren Konsens über Geflüchtete und Migrant*innen sogar eher stützen. Für viele ist der Sommer 2015, in dem die Anzahl derer, die über das Mittelmeer und die Balkanrouten nach Europa flüchteten, sprunghaft zunahm, ein zeitlich markantes Datum. Dabei ist weniger die erhöhte Anzahl von Migrationsbewegungen nach Europa, sondern

vielmehr die Beobachtung ausschlaggebend, dass eine anfängliche ‚Willkommensstimmung‘, wie sie sich in vielen europäischen Ländern zunächst ausmachen ließ, letztlich doch umschlug. Spätestens seit dem Winter 2015 sind xenophobe Ressentiments sowie Forderungen nach einer stärkeren Abgrenzung Europas immer deutlicher zu vernehmen und werden in vielerlei Hinsicht von der Politik umgesetzt. In vielen europäischen Gesellschaften werden nationalistische und rassistische Aussagen immer häufiger als ‚sagbar‘ deklariert und scheinen immer mehr den Konsens auszumachen, den sowohl die meisten der besprochenen Künstler*innen als auch die Autor*innen identifizieren und auf den sie reagieren. Zu diesem Konsens, oder besser zu dieser Hegemonie, gehören die verschiedenen Mechanismen und Praktiken der Ausgrenzung und des Ausschlusses, denen Migrant*innen und Geflüchtete täglich ausgesetzt sind (sowohl an den diversen Transit- als auch den letztlichen Ankunftsorten).

— Ausgehend von Mouffe bleibt jedoch die Frage, was es konkret bedeutet, nicht einfach nur Dekonstruktion zu betreiben, sondern weitergehend in den hegemonialen Konsens zu intervenieren und Orte für Dissens zu eröffnen. Was dies von einer explizit intersektionalen Position aus bedeutet? Nach unserer Aufforderung, sich an unserem Heft zu beteiligen, konnten wir feststellen, dass es unter Wissenschaftler*innen ein großes Interesse gibt, sich mit Fragen der Intervention auseinanderzusetzen und zu diskutieren, welche ästhetischen Erfahrungen einen Agonismus im Sinne Mouffes ermöglichen. Dagegen war die Aufmerksamkeit bezüglich der Rolle, die Geschlecht und Sexualität in den künstlerischen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Diskurs um die ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ spielen, eher gering. Angesichts von großen Ereignissen und schwerwiegenden gesellschaftlichen Konflikten scheinen queerfeministische Fragen wieder in den Hintergrund zu rücken. Wir hoffen mit unserem Heft nicht nur den Impuls zu setzen, die Erkenntnisse der queerfeministischen und gendertheoretischen Forschung in zukünftigen Analysen zu Flucht und Migration stärker aufzugreifen und weiter zu führen, sondern wir fordern diese Perspektive, gerade in Zeiten einer zunehmenden Polarisierung und Individualisierung, als dringend nötig ein!

— In dem vorliegenden Heft – soviel sei hier vorweggenommen – haben sich zwei Aspekte als zentral herauskristallisiert: Intensiv diskutiert wird zum Einen, welche medienspezifischen Techniken und Strategien der Darstellung zu welchen ästhetischen Erfahrungen führen und welche Effekte dies hat. Während Einige auf

diese Frage antworten, dass sie vor allem in neueren digitalen Medien (virtuelle Räume, Handyvideos, digitale Filme) Möglichkeiten sehen, andere Formen der Darstellung und auch der Teilhabe zu kreieren, rekurren. Andere wiederum auf tradierte Formen des künstlerischen Ausdrucks (z.B. Literatur, Theater) und zeigen darin ein Potenzial auf, Dissens zu ermöglichen bzw. Raum für Dissens zu schaffen. Verbindend ist, dass fast alle Autor*innen besprechen, inwiefern die jeweiligen Projekte Geflüchtete selbst beteiligen und deren Positionen sicht- und hörbar machen, ohne dabei erneut paternalistische, ausbeuterische und letztlich neokoloniale Machtverhältnisse zu (re)produzieren. Daher verfolgen viele der hier besprochenen Projekte das Anliegen, Geflüchtete entgegen der dominanten Berichterstattung als autonome, aktive und widerständige Individuen und nicht nur als passive Opfer darzustellen. Zu Recht ist dieses Ziel verknüpft mit der Vorgehensweise, dass Geflüchtete selbst *zu Wort* kommen respektive an der Bildproduktion beteiligt sein sollen. Reflektiert wird, *wie* sie an der jeweiligen künstlerischen Arbeit partizipieren können, *wie* vermieden wird, in einer kolonialen Geste erneut über oder *für* sie zu sprechen und sie in voyeuristischer und stereotyper Form zu sehen zu geben. Viele der Beiträge fokussieren daher auf die Frage, wie diese Partizipation gerahmt wird und mit welchem Effekt sie sich zur gegenwärtigen eurozentrischen Hegemonie verhält.

— Auch Mouffe proklamiert, dass kritische Kunst konstituiert wird „by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony“ (2007: 4f). Diese von Mouffe als Aufgabe kritischer Kunst formulierte Forderung ist ein im transnationalen Feminismus zentral diskutiertes Anliegen. Vor allem Feministinnen aus dem globalen Süden äußern schon seit Langem Skepsis gegenüber den Versuchen weißer Feministinnen, über und für ‚andere‘ Frauen zu sprechen. Genannt seien hier zwei der bekanntesten Wissenschaftlerinnen, die vehement Einspruch in einen vielleicht gut gemeinten, aber letztlich paternalistischen weißen Feminismus artikulierten. So hat Chandra Talpade Mohanty Ende der 1980er Jahre aufgezeigt, dass viele weiße Feministinnen gerade in ihrem Anspruch, über und *für* ‚andere‘ Frauen zu sprechen, diese Frauen erneut homogenisierten, kolonialisierten und instrumentalisierten: „the application of the notion of women as a homogeneous category (...) colonizes and appropriates the pluralities of the simultaneous location of different groups of women in social class and ethnic frameworks; in doing so it ultimately robs them of their historical and political *agency*.“ (1988: 79).

—— Einen weitergehenden Einspruch formulierte Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak unter dem provokanten Titel „Can the Subaltern speak?“ (1988). Dass dieser Ende der 1980er Jahre veröffentlichte Text bzw. die damit angestoßenen Überlegungen nach wie vor hochgradig aktuell sind, wurde uns während der Lektüre der eingereichten Artikel immer deutlicher. Spivak proklamiert, dass selbst wenn westliche Intellektuelle meinen, Subalternen eine Stimme zu geben oder sie ihnen die Möglichkeit ‚zum Sprechen‘ eröffnen, selten Frauen²⁾ zu Wort kommen. Selbst wenn sie ‚sprechen‘, so argumentiert Spivak weiter, würden sie nicht verstanden, da auch das Hören hegemonial strukturiert sei. In ihrer weiteren wissenschaftlichen Arbeit hat Spivak das Anliegen verfolgt, herauszufinden, wie Rahmenbedingungen geschaffen werden können, dass die Subalterne gehört und verstanden werden kann.³⁾ Unserer Ansicht nach ist diese Frage immer noch aktuell; die Beiträge in diesem Heft bestätigen uns darin. Viele der Aufsätze zeigen auf, dass es nicht um ein simples Zum-Sprechen-Bringen geht, sondern dass es immer auch Strategien benötigt, die die hegemonialen Machtstrategien und -mechanismen offen legen, mit denen Ausschlüsse produziert werden. Dieser Ansatz scheint uns demzufolge wichtig weiter verfolgt und erweitert zu werden – die Geschichte der feministischen Debatten darüber, sollte dabei nicht vergessen werden.

DIE BEITRÄGE IM EINZELNEN —— Sabine Nielsen bespricht mit *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalization* ein kuratorisches Projekt, das sie 2015–18 am *KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces*, Køge durchführte. Ausgehend von der Arbeit *The Room* (2018) von Pejk Malinovski befragt sie die Möglichkeiten, aber auch die Aufgaben von Kunst und Künstler*innen, sowie ihre eigene Funktion als Kuratorin angesichts der konfliktreichen Stimmung in der dänischen Gesellschaft bezüglich der vermehrten Ankunft von Geflüchteten im Sommer 2015. Nielsen diskutiert, wie der Künstler dabei mit seiner privilegierten Position umgeht und inwiefern es ihm gelingt, anhand eines virtuellen Raums eine ästhetische Erfahrung zu erzeugen, die dazu führt, dass hegemoniale Machtstrukturen in Europa befragt werden. Zweierlei hebt sie dabei hervor: Zum Einen die konzeptuellen Möglichkeiten, die das Medium des virtuellen Raums eröffnet, und zum Anderen die Diskussionen, die das Projekt initiierte, als es nicht nur in der Institution des Kunstmuseums, sondern auch an einem öffentlichen Platz gezeigt wurde. Unter Bezug auf Chantal Mouffe erläutert sie, inwiefern über die künst-

2) Diese Aussage kann auf alle Subalternen bezogen werden, die aufgrund von Geschlecht, Sexualität, aber auch Klasse usw. marginalisiert sind.

3) Siehe dazu u.a. ihren Aufsatz „Wer hört die Subalterne? Rück- und Ausblicke“ Dezember 2014, in *Luxemburg Gesellschaftsanalyse und linke Praxis* <https://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/wer-hoert-die-subalterne-rueck-und-ausblick/>

lerische Arbeit sich ein agonistischer öffentlicher Raum eröffnete, der nicht nur zu Kontakten zwischen unterschiedlichen Akteur*innen führte, sondern auch die laut Mouffe notwendigerweise vorhandenen Konflikte ausagieren ließ.

— Auch Claire E. Jandot nimmt einen solchen Ort der Kunst, der zu Agonismen führen kann, als Ausgangspunkt ihrer Analyse. Aus der Ausstellung *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber: Questioning Myths, Facts and Framings of Migration*, die von April bis Juni 2016 in der Framer Framed Gallery in Amsterdam zu sehen war, bespricht sie zwei dort präsentierte, aber in ihren Strategien unterschiedliche künstlerische Arbeiten: Die Audioskulptur *Bosbolobosboco #6 (Departure-Transit-Arrival)* (2014) von Libia Castro und Ólafur Ólafsson und die Installation *Conflicted Phonemes* (2012) von Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Während die Arbeit von Castro und Ólafsson individuelle Erfahrungen von Migrant*innen hörbar und auch körperlich fühlbar macht und damit Empathie und Identifikationen evozieren will, setzt sich die Arbeit von Abu Hamdan mit Mechanismen und Verfahren der niederländischen Asylpolitik auseinander. Jandot bringt die beiden Arbeiten miteinander in Diskussion. Dabei wägt sie ab, wie sich die jeweiligen künstlerischen Strategien zu den Strategien administrativer Institutionen der Migrationsregime verhalten und welche Effekte sie damit bei den Betrachtenden und Zuhörenden sowie letztlich auf den öffentlichen Diskurs haben könnten.

— Sven Seibel bespricht zwei jüngere Dokumentarfilme, die beide mit partizipativen Strategien arbeiten und dabei von Geflüchteten gefilmte Aufnahmen verwenden: *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* und *Les Sauteurs* (beide 2016). In einer vergleichenden Analyse der beiden Filme legt er dar, wie die dokumentarischen Produktionen versuchen *andere*, nicht-hegemoniale Bilder zu erzeugen und in die dominante Bildproduktion zu intervenieren. Er diskutiert ihre Versuche, den aktuellen Viktimisierungsnarrativen zu entkommen und fragt unter Bezug auf Poonga Rangan (2017), inwiefern es ihnen gelingt, eine *Vernehmbarkeit* von Migration herzustellen. Während er dabei zumindest in einem Film auch Formen der Normierung und der Unsichtbarmachung ausmachen kann, hebt er jedoch auch die Thematisierung der Voraussetzungen für das jeweilige Sprechen, aber auch des Zuhörens hervor. Eine Thematisierung, die über ein bloße Form der Sichtbar- oder Hörbarmachung hinausgeht und subtile Formen von Handlungsfähigkeit und Widerständigkeit wahrnehmbar macht.

— Janna Houwens Beitrag zu diesem Heft fokussiert ebenfalls auf Interventionen aus dem Bereich des Films in den Diskurs über die ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘. Ausgehend von Maurizio Lazzaratos *Maschinentheorie* (2014) und seinen Überlegungen über die Rolle des Nicht-Diskursiven in Überwachungs- und Kontrollsystemen schlägt sie vor, die aktuelle EU-Grenzpolitik als Teil eines großen, komplexen und professionellen Systems zu betrachten, das sie *Flüchtlingsmaschine* nennt. Auf der Basis einer kritischen Parallelektüre von zwei aktuellen Arthouse-Dokumentarfilmen: Morgan Knibbe’s *Those Who Feel the Fire Burning* (2014) und Nathalie Loubeyre’s *Flow Mechanics* (2016), argumentiert sie, dass diese Filme nicht nur das Funktionieren einer solchen Flüchtlingsmaschine aufzeigen, sondern diese in einer mit Lazzarato als a-signifikant beschriebenen Weise hinterfragen und sich ihrem Funktionieren widersetzen. Durch den Einsatz von spezifischen technologischen Mitteln gelingt es ihnen, in nicht individualisierter, pathischer Form, Affekte und körperliche Wahrnehmungen zum Ausdruck zu bringen, die den Objektivierungs- und Versklavungsprozessen der *Flüchtlingsmaschine* entgegenwirken.

— Die Sozialanthropologin Martha Bouziouri wiederum eröffnet eine Perspektive, die sich von ihrer Praxis als Theaterdramaturgin ausgehend dem Thema dieses Heftes annähert. Ihre Auseinandersetzung mit den Fallstricken und Herausforderungen von Repräsentationen von Migrant*innen und Geflüchteten im dokumentarischen Theater ist geprägt von der Theaterworkshop-Reihe *From Field to Stage; Dramaturgies of the Other*, die sie seit 2018 entwickelt. Sie versuchte mit dieser Reihe dem Phänomen zu entgegnen, das Ipek Çelik „the overarching trope of victimhood“ (2015: 127) genannt hat. Bouziouri verbindet in ihrem Beitrag ethnographische Erkenntnisse mit einem Wissen, das sie von Akteur*innen, die selbst geflüchtet sind, und aus ihrer eigenen Arbeit als Dramaturgin gewonnen hat. Ziel der Workshop-Reihe ist es, über die lähmende Unterscheidung zwischen ‚uns‘ und ‚den Anderen‘ hinauszugehen und zugleich zu einer alternativen Konzeptualisierung der Bühne als Raum der Begegnung und der *kritischen Intimität* zu gelangen. Zentral für diesen Prozess ist die Selbstreflexion: Was bedeutet die aktuelle Hegemonie für mich als Schauspieler*in, Regisseur*in, als Subjekt? Wie bin ich in dieser positioniert, insbesondere im Verhältnis zu ‚den Anderen‘? Selbstreflexion wird so nicht nur zur Voraussetzung für eine *kritische Intimität* all jener, die am Theater beteiligt sind, sondern trägt indirekt auch dazu bei, einen agonistischen

Raum auf der Bühne zu öffnen. Das Titelbild dieser *FKW*-Ausgabe zeigt eine Szene aus einem anderen von Bouziouris Stücken, das ebenfalls auf einer Kombination aus dokumentarischem Theater und Ethnographie basiert und zum kritischen Nachdenken anregt. Das Stück *Amarynthos*, das während des *Athens and Epidaurus Festival 2018* aufgeführt wurde, konfrontiert die Zuschauer*innen mit der Narrativierung von sexueller Gewalt und der prekären Wahrheitsfindung in Situationen, in denen Unterschiede zwischen Geschlechtern, Klassen und ethnischer Zugehörigkeit die Strukturen von Ein- und Ausschlüssen wesentlich bestimmen.

— Sarah Beeks analysiert in ihrem Aufsatz die Rolle des niederländischen Schriftstellers, Dichters und Intellektuellen Ilja Pfeijffer, der sich nicht nur in den Niederlanden, sondern auch auf europäischer Ebene immer wieder in öffentliche Debatten um die sogenannte ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ eingemischt hat. Beeks diskutiert seine Positionierung als niederländischer, weißer, männlicher *public intellectual* auch vor dem Hintergrund der Neuverhandlungen der europäischen Identität und der Konzeption von Europa. Anhand eines *close readings* von Pfeiffers Text *Brief aan Europa* (2015) stellt sie die Frage, welchen spezifischen Beitrag Literatur leisten kann und welche Bildersprache und literarische Strategien Pfeiffer dafür einsetzt. Sie zeigt sie auf, wie Pfeiffers explizit transnationale Positionierung als Europäer und seine dezidierte Kritik an der Abschottungspolitik der EU doch auch wieder tradierte Bilder, vor allem auch Geschlechterbilder, fortschreibt.

— Auch die zwei Rezensionen unseres Heftes befassen sich mit der Frage nach künstlerischen Positionierungen angesichts der sogenannten ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ und aktuellen Diskursen über Migration sowie mit aktueller wissenschaftlicher Forschung dazu: Veronika Schöne rezensiert die Ausstellung *Die Blaue Stunde* (November 2018 bis Januar 2019, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg) des Künstlers Khaled Barakeh. In einer intensiven Lektüre seiner Arbeiten, die um die Themen Krieg, Exil, Folter und Flucht kreisen, reflektiert sie darüber, welche Strategien er anwendet, um Leiden zu thematisieren, ohne es in voyeuristischer Weise auszustellen. Weiterhin beschreibt sie, wie er die Betrachtenden dazu auffordert, eine eigene Haltung zu beziehen und wie es ihm mit einer reduzierten Formensprache gelingt, politische und zugleich emotionale Inhalte zu verhandeln, während er außerdem die Klischees adressiert, mit denen er als aus Syrien nach Deutschland migrierter Künstler konfrontiert ist. Katharina Hoffmann und Verena Hücke haben einen interdisziplinären

Sammelband rezensiert, der von Christoph Rass und Melanie Ulz mit dem Titel *Migration ein Bild geben. Visuelle Aushandlungen von Diversität* (2018) herausgegeben wurde. Sie legen dar, an welche Forschungen der Band anknüpft und in welcher Bandbreite sich die einzelnen Aufsätze mit verschiedenen visuellen Repräsentationen von Migration auseinandersetzen. Dabei arbeiten sie die Erkenntnisse heraus, die sich in der Verknüpfung von historischen und repräsentationskritischen Ansätzen ergeben. Am Ende regen sie Überlegungen an, wie es in der Wissenschaft möglich sein könnte, nicht-westliche Wissensproduktionen und alternative Wissenstraditionen stärker einzubeziehen und eine stärker transkulturelle Perspektive zu entwickeln – eine Überlegung, die sich auch an das vorliegende Heft anschließen kann.

—— Selbstkritisch müssen wir leider anmerken, dass die wenigsten der hier besprochenen künstlerischen Projekte ihren Fokus auf geflüchtete Frauen, Queers, Transpersonen oder andere marginalisierte Subjekte richten. Umso mehr freuen wir uns, dass mit der Edition von Hannimari Jokinen auf die spezifischen Fluchterfahrungen und die Handlungsmacht von Frauen hingewiesen wird. Jokinen hat für uns eine vierteilige Siebdruckserie entwickelt. Diese ist aus dem Projekt *Greener Pastures* (2015–19) hervorgegangen, das sie gemeinsam mit Frauen durchführte, die aus verschiedenen Ländern nach Deutschland migriert sind. Ein wesentlicher Teil dieses Projektes sind die auf Interviews basierenden Lebensgeschichten der Frauen, deren Lektüre wir nur empfehlen können: <http://www.kupla.de/greener.htm>. Ein Text von Kea Wienand in der vorliegenden Ausgabe bespricht Jokinens Edition und erläutert das dazugehörige Projekt.

—— Im Vorfeld der Veröffentlichung erzählte Hannimari Jokinen uns von einer Frau (deren Namen wir aus verschiedenen Gründen hier nicht nennen), die aus einem Kriegsgebiet nach Deutschland geflüchtet war und später in Hamburg an dem oben genannten Projekt teilgenommen hatte. In die Zeit der Zusammenarbeit fiel die Entscheidung der deutschen Bundesregierung, das Recht auf Familiennachzug für sogenannte subsidiär Geschützte auszusetzen. Wie für viele andere hatte diese Entscheidung für die Frau und ihre Angehörigen weitreichende Konsequenzen. Sie hatte sich damals auf den Weg nach Europa gemacht, hatte diverse Hindernisse und Gefahren überwunden, um hier einen sicheren Ort für ihre Kinder und ihren Partner zu finden. Nachdem ihre Pläne dermaßen unmöglich gemacht wurden, ist der Kontakt zwischen Jokinen und ihr irgendwann abgerissen. Die Vermutung liegt nah, dass sie zurück zu ihrer Familie gereist ist. Es sind Geschichten

wie diese, die selten in der medialen Öffentlichkeit vorkommen. Geflüchtete gelten als überwiegend männlich. Wir wollen hier nicht behaupten, dass die vermehrte Veröffentlichung solcher Geschichten Politiker*innen quasi automatisch zu einem veränderten Bewusstsein und zu anderen Entscheidungen bringt oder zu mehr Solidarität in der europäischen Gesellschaft führen würde. Aber die *Stimmen* dieser Frau und anderer, die ungehört bleiben, sind nötig, um in bestehende gesellschaftliche Ordnungen zu intervenieren und sie zu nachhaltig zu verändern.

// Literatur

- Carastathis, Anna / Kouri-Towe, Natalie / Mahrouse, Gada / Whitley, Leila (2018): Introduction. In: *Refuge* 34, 1, S. 3–15
- Çelik, Ipek A. (2015): In *Permanent Crisis. Ethnicity in Contemporary European Media and Cinema*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press
- De Genova, Nicholas (Hg.) (2017): *The Borders of 'Europe'. Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press
- Hess, Sabine / Kasperek, Bernd / Kron, Stefanie/Rodatz, Mathias / Schwertl, Maria / Sontowski, Simon (2016): *Der lange Sommer der Migration. Krise, Rekonstitution und ungewisse Zukunft des europäischen Grenzregimes*. In: Dies. (Hg.): *Der lange Sommer der Migration. Grenzregime III*. Hamburg, Assoziation A
- Laclau, Ernesto / Mouffe, Chantal (2006, 3. Auflage): *Hegemonie und radikale Demokratie. Zur Dekonstruktion des Marxismus*. Wien, Passagen Verlag (Orig.: 1985: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London/New York, Verso)
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (2014): *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. South Pasadena, CA, Semiotext(e)
- Mohanty, Chandra (1988): *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*. In: *Feminist Review* 30, Autumn, S. 61–88
- Mouffe, Chantal (2007): *Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces*. In: *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 1, 2, S. 1–5
- Mouffe, Chantal (2014): *Agonistik. Die Welt politisch denken*. Berlin, suhrkamp
- Rangan, Pooja (2017): *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*. Durham/London, Duke University Press
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988): *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In: Nelson, Cary / Grossberg, Lawrence (Hg.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, S. 271–313

// Über die Autorinnen

Kea Wienand, lebt und arbeitet in Bremen, Kunstwissenschaftlerin, Mitglied der Redaktion *FKW // Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur*. Ihre Schwerpunkte in Forschung und Lehre sind: Kunst und visuelle Kultur des 20./21. Jahrhunderts, Gender und Postcolonial Studies, Intersektionalitätsforschung, kritische Migrationsforschung, transkulturelle Darstellungen von Geschichte in der Gegenwartskunst, Künstlermythenforschung. Stipendiatin, Mitarbeiterin, Lehrbeauftragte, Gastprofessorin an verschd. Universitäten und Kunsthochschulen. Ausgewählte Publikationen: *Nach dem Primitivismus? Künstlerische Verhandlungen kultureller Differenz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1960–1990. Eine postkoloniale Relektüre* (Bielefeld, transcript 2015) und *„Deutsche“ Kolonialgeschichte als Thema postkolonialer Kunst*. In: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst/Joachim Zeller (Hg.): *Deutschland postkolonial? Die Gegenwart der imperialen Vergangenheit* (Berlin, Metropol Verlag 2018, S. 432–453).

Liesbeth Minnaard arbeitet am Institut für Film- und Literaturwissenschaften der Universität Leiden. Ihre Schwerpunkte in Forschung und Lehre sind: Intersektionalität, kritische Migrationsforschung, Europa ‚in der Krise‘ und Aktivismus im Bereich der Kunst und Literatur. Ausgewählte Publikationen: *New Germans, New Dutch. Literary Interventions* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Mitherausgeberin von *Challenging the Myth of Monolingualism* (Brill, 2014). Aktuell ist sie beteiligt an dem Publikationsprojekt *Crisis and Critique: Languages of Resistance, Transformation and Futurity in Mediterranean Crisis-Scapes* (Palgrave 2020). Sie ist Mitorganisatorin der *Platform for Postcolonial Readings* und Mitglied des Vorstands der *Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies*.

// FKW wird gefördert durch das Mariann Steegmann Institut und das Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts der Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// Lizenz

Der Text ist lizenziert unter der CC-BY-NC-ND Lizenz 4.0 International. Der Lizenzvertrag ist abrufbar unter: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.de>



INTRODUCTION //

TAKING POSITIONS ON THE 'REFUGEE CRISIS': CRITICAL RESPONSES IN ART AND LITERATURE

The recent rise in global migration movements¹⁾ and the simultaneous massive attempts to prevent migrations to the Global North have produced numerous images, concepts and narrations that try to record and convey these events and their actors. Many of these representations depict migrants as suspects and border crossings as uncontrollable. Representations of flight and illegal migration have, however, become suspect themselves in the process. In many different European countries, these images have been accompanied by discussions of their appropriateness, moral permissibility, and sociopolitical functions. There has been less reflection on how forms of making visible/invisible or making audible/silencing migration and flight are sometimes techniques of repressive migration regimes and exclusionary practices. Accordingly, not every form of in/visibility or in/audibility should be understood as *critical* per se but should rather be questioned with regard to its statements and effects as well as possible exclusions and perpetuations. Since 2015 at the latest there has been, in the artistic sphere but also in popular and media culture, an effort to find more *critical* reflections on the topic. *New* grammars and *alternative* forms of visualising or narrating flight and migration are sought that reject criminalising discourses on terrorism and threat and avoid the highly present and always also gendered topos of the victim. But *what* should these *new* or *different* visualisations and narrations look like, and what is understood today, in a Europe afflicted by diverse 'crises', as truly *critical* and *progressive*? How do artists, writers, filmmakers and creative and intellectual people in general respond to and position themselves vis-à-vis discourses on the so-called refugee crisis?

— In view of the increasingly hardening debates and the vehement demands for a stronger isolation of Europe, it seems to us urgently necessary to ask these questions—and specifically from an explicit perspective of cultural studies, queer-feminism, and postcolonialism. Such a perspective also considers, first, that the experiences of (illegalised) border crossing can be extremely different depending on how the individuals are positioned as subjects in the hierarchies of gender, race, class, age, religion, and sexuality (on this, see also Catastathis et al. 2017, 6). Second, it

1) In what follows we use various terms for the people and for their various fleeing and migration movements. We have left it to the authors to choose terms appropriate for their texts. Much as formulated by Sabine Hess et al. (2017, 6), we are critical of scholarship that thinks of different people, movements and motivations in narrow categories and statistics. Rather, we adopt positions that point out that all these terms are also inventions of the state (De Genova 2017, 8) used to mark and regulate those who cross borders (on this, see Catastathis et al. 2018, 4).

incorporates the fact that representations – that is, talk about and visualisations of flight and migration – are permeated by gendered and racist stereotypes and assumptions that affect reality. It was not the concern of our project to find a conclusive, uniform answer; rather, the point was to provide impetus to this discussion and to get involved in these debates from an intersectional perspective.

— As the starting point for this discussion, we have proposed Chantal Mouffe's agonistic approach, which she has presented in various publications (Mouffe 2007 and 2013). This approach is founded on an idea of society that she developed with Ernesto Laclau and published in several places (e.g., Laclau and Mouffe 1985). In this radically anti-essentialist view, every social order is considered to be the product of hegemonic practices or power relations (Mouffe 2013: 1–18). According to Mouffe, social orders are always the result of processes of negotiation (in which emotions and affects also play a role) and of the hegemonies thereby established. In this understanding, every social order is based on the exclusion of other possibilities (Mouffe 2013: 2) and can therefore be called into question by anti-hegemonic practices. Mouffe is thus arguing against the liberalist idea of a universal and rationalist consensus that could ideally be achieved in a society (Mouffe 2013: 3). Instead, she understands every society as a permeated by ineradicable antagonisms, that is, by unbridgeable contradictions.

— Her approach does not seek to get around or resolve the constitutive character of these social contradictions and the conflicts that result from them but rather look them in the eye (Mouffe 2013: 6f.). In that sense, she understands the political as conflict over hegemony between different positions. Mouffe proposes that the antagonisms become agonisms, that is, different positions become not antagonists, not enemies, but rather adversaries who join in discussion with one another. Distinguishing herself from approaches that describe public space as a terrain on which one seeks to produce a consensus, she understands it as a place where conflicting points of view meet without a reconciliation being desirable or possible at all (Mouffe 2013: 7). For all her skepticism about more recent developments of the post-Fordist economy and about the appropriation of aesthetic strategies of the counter-culture for a capitalist order, she sees a special opportunity in the field of art for creating an agonistic public space. In this view, critical art would be art that stirs up dissent. Critical artistic practices would open up alternatives to established points of view or to common sense (Mouffe 2013: 90, and Mouffe 2007: 4). They are not merely about the deconstruction of hegemonic points of

view and assumptions or about a simple pluralism of positions but about initiating spaces in which hegemony can be openly attacked (Mouffe 2013: 92). Critical art would, according to Mouffe, make it possible to underscore existing agonisms in order to call the hegemony into question with, among other things, aesthetic experiences (Mouffe 2013: 97).

— This issue of *FKW*, titled ‘Taking Positions on the ‘Refugee Crisis’: Critical Responses in Art and Literature,’ can be understood as itself a place in which a controversial debate becomes possible but also as a place from which hegemony can be called into question. Our authors were asked to examine the artistic works or positions in question to what extent – that is, whether and, if so, *how* – they are *critical* and *how* concretely they intervene in hegemonic orders, in this case above all in dominant representations of flight and the ‘refugee crisis’. All of the essays and reviews collected here discuss the extent to which the individual projects manage to do this, the difficulties or ambiguities that result in the process, and where supposedly well-intentioned projects instead do more to support the apparent consensus about refugees and migrants. For many, the summer of 2015 is a prominent date, in which the number of those flight to Europe via the Mediterranean and the Balkan routes increased enormously. The decisive factor was not so much this increased number of migration movements to Europe but rather the observation that an initial ‘welcoming atmosphere’ that could be identified in many European countries quite abruptly changed. Since the winter of 2015 at the latest, xenophobic resentments and calls to strengthen European borders have been heard every more clearly and in many respects are being implemented by politicians. In many European societies, nationalist and racist statements are more frequently being declared ‘sayable’. More and more, they seem to represent the consensus that most of the artists and authors discussed here identify and to which they are reacting. This consensus – or, better, this hegemony – includes various mechanisms and practices of banning and exclusion to which migrants and refugees are exposed daily (both in the diverse transit sites and where they ultimately arrive).

— Setting out from Mouffe, however, the question remains: What does it mean concretely not simply to pursue deconstruction but to intervene into the hegemonic consensus and to open up places for dissent. What does this mean from an explicitly intersectional position? After our call to participate in this issue, we found that scholars were very interested in engaging with

questions of intervention and discussing which aesthetic experiences make an agonism in Mouffe's sense possible. By contrast, there was relatively little attention paid to the role that gender and sexuality play in artistic engagements with the discourse on the 'refugee crisis'. In view of the current events and serious social conflicts, queer-feminist questions seem to be moving to the background again. Not only do we hope that our issue will provide an impulse to take up and develop the insights of queer-feminist and gender-theory scholarship in future analyses of flight and migration, but we also demand this perspective as urgently necessary, especially in times of increasing polarisation and individualization.

— In the present issue, two aspects were distilled as central: First, there was an intense discussion of which media-specific techniques and strategies of representation lead to which aesthetic experiences and which effect this has. Whereas several contributors answered this question by saying that they see opportunities to create other forms of representation and participation above all in recent digital media (virtual spaces, mobile phone videos, digital films), others turned to traditional forms of artistic expression (e.g., literature, theatre) and showed their potential for creating room for dissent. Nearly all of the authors had in common that they discussed the extent to which refugees themselves participate in the projects in question without (re)producing anew paternalistic, exploitative and ultimately neocolonial power relationships. For that reason, many of the projects discussed here are concerned with depicting refugees – contrary to the dominant reporting – as autonomous, active and defiant individuals and not just as passive victims. This goal has been linked with the approach that refugees themselves should be allowed to speak or to participate in the production of images. They reflect on *how* they can participate in the artistic work in question, *how* one avoids not only speaking *about* or *for* them in a renewal of a colonial gesture but also presenting them in a voyeuristic and stereotypical form. Many of the contributions thus focus on the question of how this participation is framed and with what effect it relates to contemporary Eurocentric hegemony.

— Mouffe, too, proclaims that critical art is constituted 'by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony' (2007, 4–5). This demand formulated by Mouffe as a task for critical art is a central concern of transnational feminism. Feminists from the Global South in particular have long expressed skepticism about the efforts of white feminists to speak about and for

‘other’ women. We mention here two of the most famous scholars who vehemently articulated an objection to a perhaps well-meant but ultimately paternalistic white feminism. For example, in the late 1980s Chandra Talpade Mohanty showed that many white feminists, precisely in their effort to speak *about* and *for* ‘other’ women were once again homogenising, colonising and instrumentalising these women: ‘the application of the notion of women as a homogeneous category [...] colonizes and appropriates the pluralities of the simultaneous location of different groups of women in social class and ethnic frameworks; in doing so it ultimately robs them of their historical and political *agency*.’ (1988: 79).

—— Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak formulated a farther-reaching objection under the provocative title ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988). As we read the articles submitted, it became increasingly clear that this text published in the late 1980s and the reflections it has since inspired remain highly topical today. Spivak pointed out that even when Western intellectuals believe they are giving a voice to subalterns or giving them an opportunity ‘to speak’, it is rare that women have a say.²⁾ Even when they ‘speak’, Spivak argued, they were not understood, because the structure of listening is hegemonic as well. In her subsequent scholarly work, Spivak was concerned with finding how to create the basic conditions for subalterns to be heard and understood.³⁾ In our view, Spivak’s question is still very topical: the contributions in this issue reaffirmed that for us. Many of the essays show that is not about simply ‘causing to speak’ but that it is also always necessary to have strategies that expose the hegemonic power strategies and mechanisms with which exclusions are produced. It therefore seems important to us to further pursue and expand this approach – and the history of feminist debates on the subject should not be forgotten when doing so.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN DETAIL —— In *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalisation*, Sabine Nielsen discusses a curatorial project she implemented from 2015 to 2018 at the KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces in Køge. Starting out from the work *The Room* (2018) by Pejk Malinovski, she questions the opportunities but also the tasks of art and artists as well as her own function as curator in light of conflicts in Danish society over the increased arrivals of refugees in the summer of 2015. Nielsen discusses how the artist deals with his privileged position and the extent to which his use of a virtual space successfully produces an aesthetic experience that leads to questioning the hegemonic

2) This statement can be related to all subalterns who are marginalised on the basis of gender and sexuality but also on class, and so on.

3) On this, see, among others, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘In Response: Looking Back, Looking Forward’, in Rosalind Morris, *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 227–36.

power structures in Europe. She emphasises two things: first, the conceptual possibilities that the medium of virtual space opens up and, second, the discussions that the project initiated when it was shown not only in the institution of the art museum but also in a public square. With reference to Chantal Mouffe, she explains the extent to which the artistic work opens up an agonistic public space that not only leads to contacts between different actors but also, according to Mouffe, causes the inevitable conflicts to be acted out.

— Claire E. Jandot, too, takes such a space for art that can lead to agonisms as the point of departure for her analysis. From the exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber: Questioning Myths, Facts and Framings of Migration*, which was on view at the Framer Framed Gallery in Amsterdam from April to June 2016, she discusses two artistic works that were both presented there but that employ very different strategies: the audio sculpture *Bosbolobosboco #6 (Departure-Transit-Arrival)* (2014) by Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson and the installation *Conflicted Phonemes* (2012) by Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Whereas the work by Castro and Ólafsson makes the individual experiences of migrants audible and also physically palpable, in an effort to evoke empathy and identification, the work by Abu Hamdan grapples with the mechanisms and procedures of Dutch asylum policy. Jandot brings the two works together in a discussion. In it she weighs how the artistic strategies in each case relate to the strategies of administrative institutions of the migration regime and what effects they could have on the viewers and listeners and ultimately on the public discourse.

— Sven Seibel discusses two recent documentary films, both of which work with participatory strategies and use shots made by refugees with mobile phones or (digital) cameras: *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* und *Les Sauteurs* (both 2016). In a comparative analysis of the two films, he shows how the documentary productions attempt to produce *other*, non-hegemonic images and to intervene in the dominant production of images. He discusses their attempts to escape current narratives of victimisation and, with reference to Poonga Rangan (2017), asks to which extent they succeed in making migration *perceptible*. Whereas in at least one film, he is able to make out forms of standardisation and making invisible, he emphasises the thematisation of the prerequisites for speaking but also for listening in each case. This thematisation goes beyond a mere form of making visible or audible and makes it possible to perceive subtle forms of agency and resistance.

— Janna Houwen's contribution to this issue also focuses on interventions from the field of lens-based art into the discourse on the 'refugee crisis'. Taking her cue from Maurizio Lazzarato's 'machine theory' (2014) and his reflections on the role of the non-discursive in systems of surveillance and control, she proposes seeing current EU border policy as part of a large, complex, and professional system that she calls the 'refugee machine'. On the basis of a parallel critical reading of two recent art-house documentary films – Morgan Knibbe's *Those Who Feel the Fire Burning* (2014) and Nathalie Loubeyre's *Flow Mechanics* (2016) – she argues that these films not only reveal the workings of this refugee machine but also question and resist its function in what she calls, following Lazzarato, an 'a-signifying' mode. By employing specific technological means, they manage to express, in a non-individualised, pathic form, affects and bodily sensations that counter the processes of objectivation and enslavement of the *refugee machine*.

— The social anthropologist Martha Bouziouri, in turn, opens up a perspective on this issue's theme that starts out from her practice as a theatre dramaturge. Her reflections on the pitfalls and challenges of representing migrants and refugees in documentary theatre are inspired by the theatre workshop series *From Field to Stage: Dramaturgies of the Other* that she has been developing since 2018 in resisting response to what Ipek Çelik has called "the overarching trope of victimhood" (2015:127). In her contribution Bouziouri combines insights from ethnography with knowledge gained from actors who are themselves refugees and from her own work as a dramaturge. The aim of the workshop series is to go beyond the debilitating distinction between 'us' and 'them' and at the same time to arrive at an alternative conceptualisation of the stage as a space of encounter and *critical intimacy*. Self-reflection is central to this process: What does the current hegemony mean to me as an actor, director, or subject? How am I positioned within it, in particular in relation to 'others'? Self-reflection thus becomes not only a prerequisite for critical intimacy for all those involved in theatre but also contributes indirectly to opening an agonistic space on the stage. The cover image of this issue of *FKW* shows a scene from another of Bouziouri's plays, one that is also based on a combination of documentary theatre and ethnography and inspires critical reflection. The play *Amarynthos*, which was performed at the Athens and Epidaurus Festival in 2018, confronts viewers with the narrativisation of sexual violence and the precarious fabrication of truth in situations in which

differences between genders, classes and ethnic membership crucially determine patterns of in- and exclusion.

— In her essay Sarah Beeks analyses the role of the Dutch writer, poet and intellectual Ilja Pfeijffer, who has repeatedly joined public debates on the so-called refugee crisis not only in the Netherlands but also on a European level. Beeks discusses his position as a Dutch, white, male public intellectual against the backdrop of re-negotiations of European identity and the concept of Europe. In a close reading of Pfeiffer's "Brief aan Europa" (2015), she asks what specific contribution literature can make and what visual language and literary strategies Pfeiffer employs to that end. She shows how Pfeiffer's explicitly transnational positioning as a European and his decided critique of the EU's restrictive border policy nevertheless perpetuates traditional images, especially gendered images.

— The two reviews in our issue are also concerned with the question of artistic positionings in the face of the so-called refugee crisis and current discourses on migration as well as with current scholarly research on these subjects: Veronika Schöne reviews the exhibition *Die Blaue Stunde* (The Blue Hour, November 2018 to January 2019, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg) by the artist Khaled Barakeh. In an intense reading of his works, which revolve around the topics of war, exile, torture and flight, she reflects on the strategies he uses to thematise suffering without presenting it in a voyeuristic way. She also describes how he challenges viewers to take their own stance and how he manages to treat political and yet emotional subject matter using a minimal formal idiom while also addressing the clichés with which he is confronted as an artist who migrated to Germany from Syria. Katharina Hoffmann and Verena Hucke have reviewed an interdisciplinary anthology edited by Christoph Rass and Melanie Ulz titled *Migration ein Bild geben: Visuelle Aushandlungen von Diversität* (2018). They show which scholarship the volume takes up and the range with which the individual essays address different visual representations of migration. By doing so, they work out the insights that result from combining historical and representation-critical approaches. In the end, they encourage reflections on how scholars can integrate more non-Western knowledge production and alternative traditions of knowledge and thereby develop a more transcultural perspective – an idea that the present issue can also take up.

— Unfortunately, we must also be self-critical and note that few of the artistic projects discussed here focus on refugee women,

queers, transgender people or other marginalised subjects. So we are all the more pleased that Hannimari Jokinen's edition refers to women's specific refugee experiences and effective power to act. Jokinen has developed a four-part series of silk-screens for us. It emerged from the *Greener Pastures* project (2015–19) she has been pursuing with women who migrated to Germany from various countries. One essential part of this project is the life stories of women based on interviews. We highly recommend you read them: <http://www.kupla.de/greener.htm>. A text by Kea Wienand in this issue discusses Jokinen's edition and explains the associated project.

— While preparing this publication, Hannimari Jokinen told us of a woman (whose name we do not mention here for various reasons) who had fled to Germany from a war zone and later participated in the aforementioned project in Hamburg. At the time of their collaboration, the German government decided to suspend the right of family reunification for those eligible for “subsidiary protection.” This decision had far-reaching consequences for this woman, as it did for many others. At the time she had set out for Europe, she had overcome diverse obstacles and risks in order to find a safe place for her children and her partner. After her plans had been made so completely impossible, the contact between Jokinen and her broke off at some point. It is reasonable to assume that she returned with her family. Stories like these are rarely told in the media. Refugees are overwhelmingly seen as male. We are not claiming that publishing such stories more frequently would automatically change the awareness of politicians and cause them to take different decisions or lead to more solidarity in European society. But the *voices* of this woman and of others who remain unheard are necessary to intervene in existing social orders and change them permanently.

Translated by Steven Lindberg

// References

- Carastathis, Anna / Kouri-Towe, Natalie / Mahrouse, Gada / Whitley, Leila (2018): Introduction. In: *Refuge* 34, 1, pp. 3–15
- Çelik, Ipek A. (2015): *In Permanent Crisis. Ethnicity in Contemporary European Media and Cinema*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press
- De Genova, Nicholas (ed.) (2017): *The Borders of 'Europe'. Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press
- Hess, Sabine / Kasperek, Bernd / Kron, Stefanie/Rodatz, Mathias / Schwertl, Maria / Sontowski, Simon (2016): *Der lange Sommer der Migration. Krise, Rekonstitution und ungewisse Zukunft des europäischen Grenzregimes*. In: Idem. (eds.): *Der lange Sommer der Migration. Grenzregime III*. Hamburg, Assoziation A

Laclau, Ernesto / Mouffe, Chantal (1985): *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London/New York, Verso

Lazzarato, Maurizio (2014): *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. South Pasadena, CA, Semiotext(e)

Mohanty, Chandra (1988): *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*. In: *Feminist Review* 30, Autumn, pp. 61–88

Mouffe, Chantal (2007): *Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces*. In: *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 1, 2, pp. 1–5.

Mouffe, Chantal (2014): *Agonistik. Die Welt politisch denken*. Berlin, suhrkamp

Rangan, Pooja (2017): *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*. Durham/London, Duke University Press

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988): *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In: Nelson, Cary / Grossberg, Lawrence (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, pp. 271–313

// About the Authors

Kea Wienand lives and works in Bremen. Art historian, member of the editing board of *FKW // Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur*. Focus of research and teaching: art and visual culture in the 20th and 21st century, gender and postcolonial studies, intersectionality, critical migration studies, and transcultural representations of history in contemporary art. She has been awarded several scholarships and has been a guest lecturer and visiting professor at various universities. Selected publications: *Nach dem Primitivismus? Künstlerische Verhandlungen kultureller Differenz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1960–1990. Eine postkoloniale Relektüre* (Bielefeld, transcript 2015) and *„Deutsche“ Kolonialgeschichte als Thema postkolonialer Kunst*. In: Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst/Joachim Zeller (eds.): *Deutschland postkolonial? Die Gegenwart der imperialen Vergangenheit* (Berlin, Metropol Verlag 2018, p. 432–453).

Liesbeth Minnaard works at the Film and Literary Studies Department of Leiden University. Her areas of interest are intersectionality, critical migration studies, Europe 'in crisis', and activism in art and literature. She is the author of, a.o., *New Germans, New Dutch. Literary Interventions* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008) and co-editor of *Challenging the Myth of Monolingualism* (Brill, 2014). Currently she is working on the edited volume *Crisis and Critique: Languages of Resistance, Transformation and Futurity in Mediterranean Crisis-Scapes* (Palgrave 2020). She is co-organizer of the *Platform for Postcolonial Readings* and a board member of the *Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies*.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann / www.fkw-journal.de

// License

This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



STUCK BETWEEN DESTINATIONS: REFLECTIONS ON PEJK MALINOVSKI'S VIRTUAL REALITY PROJECT *THIS ROOM*

“Time is like a train that has stopped in a station. The seconds, the minutes, the hours, they are very slow. It’s not a prison, my room is not a prison, but in a way it’s a prison, that just takes away my life, my age, my youth, I cannot go back, I cannot go forward”. These words are uttered by a young man describing his experiences of living in a camp in Denmark as a rejected asylum seeker, and they appear in a recently produced virtual reality installation entitled *This Room* (2018). The installation explores and exposes the harsh, stressful and often traumatizing living conditions of refugees, and as a critical and political gesture, it thus seeks to extend visibility and audibility to those existing in globalization’s shadows, consigned as they are to life in camps.

— In my article, I will approach the topic of this special issue, i.e. critical responses to the ‘refugee crisis’ in art, through a case study of this specific installation project. In 2015–2018 I conducted a practice based curatorial research project entitled *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalization*. The project took its thematic point of departure in the ‘refugee crisis’



Fig. 1: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at Copenhagen Central Station.
© Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Ole Bo Jensen

and it consisted of an exhibition at *KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces*, Køge/Denmark, a series of commissioned art projects realized in contested transit zones, an educational program, and a series of talks and debates organized in collaboration with the Danish newspaper *Information*. In this article, I will focus specifically on the formerly mentioned virtual-reality project produced by the poet and sound artist Pejk Malinovski. I will choose to centre attention on this particular project because it has been created by means of a participatory methodological approach, because it experiments aesthetically with the blurring of boundaries between documentary and fiction, and because it seeks to facilitate conflictual encounters at a series of different sites:

Aspects all of which will appear important for my discussion of the project's production of effects and affects. Malinovski's project entitled *This Room*, which was recently selected for the renowned *International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam*,¹⁾ is about refugees who arrived in Denmark in 2015 and their subsequent fates in refugee camps. I will start by presenting and reflecting on Malinovski's project focusing specifically on the critical potential of its blurring of the boundaries between the documentary and the fictional. Subsequently, I will analyse some of the effects it has produced, not least in its capacity as a site-specific version at Copenhagen Central Station, mediated by refugees and volunteers from refugee organizations. Drawing on conflict theory and radical democracy theory, I will argue that artistic forms of critique necessitate the creation of agonistic contact zones in which negotiations can take place and counter-hegemonic publics be created.²⁾ Furthermore, I will end by arguing that taking a critical approach involves being partisan, i.e. taking a position which is dissensual, convincing and politically positioned.

STATIONS AS SOCIALLY NEGOTIATED TRANSIT SITES — Working on the *Transit* project, I commissioned a series of art projects, including the aforementioned by Malinovski, that were to focus attention on the different kinds of travellers whose paths intersect every day in public transit nodes. The overarching curatorial ambition of the project was on the one hand to explore key themes in contemporary art pertaining to mobility, migration, and globalization, and on the other hand to incorporate present-day public transit nodes as specific sites of such explorations.³⁾ *Transit* took place at – and in the case of some of the performance projects; between – KØS, Sydhavn Station Exhibition Space, Copenhagen Central Station, and the stations on the E line between Copenhagen and Køge. Copenhagen Central Station and the E line were chosen because they are characterised by a high degree of social complexity. This is partly due to the fact that stations literally connect multiple local, national and international zones. As public spaces, stations such as these thus make it possible to show how contemporary urban society is both locally embedded and defined by far-reaching networks⁴⁾. Also, they enable an investigation of public transit sites as concentrated sites of social negotiation.

— Copenhagen Central Station is a cardinal example of a transit site as a zone of social contact and conflict. It is a place where tourists and commuters cross paths on a daily basis, and where migrants and refugees also pass through. In the summer of 2015,

1) The project has also been selected for *Tempo Documentary Festival* in Sweden.

2) For the concept of 'publics and counterpublics' see Warner (1958).

3) For further reflections on this particular aspect of the project see Dahl Nielsen (2019a) and Dahl Nielsen (2019b).

4) This point is further underlined by the fact that the E line passes through an area west of Copenhagen that has been characterised by extensive migration since the 1970s.

for example, when I started working on the *Transit* project, large groups of refugees started to arrive at the station, where volunteers gathered spontaneously to bid them welcome and offer various kinds of assistance. Shortly after, however, both the refugees and volunteers were evicted from the station, since the authorities claimed that they were hindering the free movement of other passengers. The volunteers then requested the use of a room at the station, so they could help arriving refugees without causing any disturbances. After lengthy negotiations, this request was granted, but only on condition that use of the room would end in the spring of 2016. After this deadline, volunteers continued to try to help the refugees that kept arriving, albeit in smaller numbers, at Copenhagen Central Station. Now they went through the station on an ad hoc basis, looking for people in transit who needed help. Summing up, the events at Copenhagen Central Station show that transit sites are public spaces where persons in transit – in different ways, to different extents, and with radically different consequences – come into contact.

LIMBO-LIKE STAYS IN SMALL ROOMS — This *Room* is an exemplary art project within the context of the *Transit* exhibition: it highlights the fact that mobility flows are often characterized by conflicts, negotiations, and the playing out of asymmetrical power relations. In the summer of 2015, Europe experienced a large influx of refugees and migrants, including people from war-torn Syria. Images of these people on their way through Europe dominated the media. With *This Room*, Malinovski raises the question as to where they all went. That is, the refugees who walked up the highways, who came on trains and trucks and boats, and who camped out at the Copenhagen Central Train Station. Many of them were shipped off to camps all over Denmark: former prisons, tuberculosis hospitals, schools, tent camps, i.e. temporary structures fitted to house refugees. Often, however, these camps are situated in remote, rural areas, out of the public eye. With his project, Malinovski explores the refugee's trajectories, their often conflict-filled experiences of public transit nodes along the way, as well as their current, limbo-like stays in small rooms within the camps. Rooms such as these appear as transitional sites, which the artist himself describes as "suitcases stuck between destinations."⁵⁾

— Working on the project, Malinovski chose to employ a durational,⁶⁾ explorative and research-based methodological approach.⁷⁾ During the initial phase of the project, he visited a series of camps and established relationships with refugees staying there.

5) The quote is from the artist's project description: "Often camps are situated in remote, rural areas, out of the public eye. I grew up close to one of these camps in the 80's. [...] One of my strongest memories from this camp were the small rooms, where 8-10 people would sleep on bunk beds, all their belongings stuffed in big suitcases. The room itself was a kind of suitcase, stuck between destinations." See *Transit* exhibition folder (2018: 6).

6) For the concept of durational approaches to Public Art see O'Neill and Doherty (2011).

7) For further information on Malinovski's artistic methods and reflections on his collective production process see Malinovski (2019).



Subsequently, he entered into conversations with a group of six people of varying ages, genders, translocal backgrounds etc. The resulting audio recordings laid the foundation for the polyphonic virtual-reality installation shown at KØS, a site-specific version of the project presented at Copenhagen Central Station as well as a public talk about the project held at *Information*. Using various aesthetic means and activating a multiplicity of sites and publics, Malinovski thus sought to explore how today's contested transit nodes can be perceived as locations that are networked, yet always also negotiated locally though materialized and socially embodied practices.

— Regarding the working process, it is of course important to note that *This Room* was initiated, conceptualized and produced by Malinovski, i.e. by a white, male artist, who obviously inhabits a privileged position in more than one way and who by means of the art project – apart from the effects generated for the participating refugees and the viewing audiences – also profits from the project himself.⁸⁾ Malinovski is aware of this potentially problematic aspect of the project and discusses it self-critically in the article “This Room – Some notes on the process” (2019). In this article, he

Fig. 2: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at Copenhagen Central Station. © Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Ole Bo Jensen

8) For example, Malinovski has received wide press coverage in connection with launching of the project, he has been invited to speak about the project in connection with an event at *Dagbladet Information* and he has been invited to show the project at an International film festival.

refers to himself as “a white, Danish man with tons of privileges” (Malinovski 2019: 104) and he states that he “didn’t want to just helicopter in and record their [the refugees’] stories and then take off again” (ibid: 104). However, the artist’s attempts to conduct media training workshops so as to enable the refugees to “take control of their own story” and establish “some kind of equal exchange in the project” (ibid: 104), failed. First of all because the contacted Red Cross camp operation managers chose never to respond to Malinovski’s emails and second of all because a volunteer coordinator, with whom Malinovski finally managed to enter into conversation, was reluctant to allow for the workshops to be carried out because she feared that the refugees’ utterances and voiced opinions might be misunderstood or misrepresented (ibid: 104).

—— It goes without saying that the participation of the refugees in a way that would have allowed for them to not only take part in *This Room* as conversation partners, but also as actively deciding producers, would have strengthened the project. Allowing for such a genuinely collective and collaborative production process could have contributed to the contesting of the existing asymmetrical power structure. However, I will argue that the project nevertheless manages to question such power structures and to reveal the urgent need for them to be politically debated. Not least, because the project – both by means of text publications, media interviews, debating events and the staging of encounters between refugees, activists, volunteers and travellers at Copenhagen Central Station – has managed to put focus on and to problematize the unequal means of participation that characterize on the one hand a critically acclaimed white, male artist such as Malinovski and on the other hand the excluded and marginalised refugees living in the camps.

VISUALIZING VIRTUAL EUROPEAN APARTHEID —— *This Room* appears as a virtual-reality installation where two participants at a time can sit on a bench in a narrow room, wearing a virtual-reality headset. The dimensions of the installed room and the therein placed seating correspond to the ones in the rooms in the camps, thus allowing participants to be confronted with a concrete and corporeally felt experience of the limited space in question. Using the highly immediate sensory visual universe of virtual reality technology, participants are then led into a fictional space and given an immersive, physical sense of the psychological stress, fear and uncertainty that dominate the transit experiences of many refugees. Importantly, however, the experiences of the participating audiences are of course voluntarily inflicted, virtually

simulated and of a very short duration as opposed to the ones of the recounting refugees. The virtually simulated room is based on refugees' memories of the real-life transit zones and rooms they have occupied while waiting to hear the verdict on their asylum application. *This Room* can thus be described as a virtually simulated, memory-based mapping of the rooms that refugees have passed through and stayed in for shorter or longer periods of time since they left Copenhagen Central Station and practically disappeared from the media spotlight.⁹⁾

9) Some of the recounting refugees, who all appear anonymously in the art work, recount having stayed there for periods of up to seven years.

— As a critical reaction towards the regime of social and political separation that constitutes what Étienne Balibar has identified as a *virtual European apartheid*, the undemocratic and exclusionary policies of the EU in regard to its noncitizen residents (Balibar 2004: 36-50), *This Room* seeks to focus attention on the situation of refugees currently living in Danish camps. According to Balibar, the intentionally provocative expression of *virtual European apartheid* refers to the emergence of what he terms the “reduplication of external borders in the form of ‘internal borders’” nurtured by notions of national and racial identity, as well as to the “stigmatization and repression of populations whose presence within Europe societies is nonetheless increasingly massive and legitimate” (Balibar 2004: x). These matters of concern clearly resonate with Malinovski's project given that it also attempts to critically expose the exclusionary mechanisms of current asylum policies and to highlight the emergence of a situation in which refugees living in Danish camps appear detached from the rest of society and stripped of political agency.

— It is important to note, however, that Malinovski's artistic attempt at contesting so-called *virtual European apartheid* is not realized by employing conventional documentary practices. Thus, in *This Room* the use of virtual reality can be said to blur the boundaries between the documentary and the fictional. The soundtrack is assembled from audio recordings conducted by the artist during his recurrent visits to a specific camp called *Avnstrup*, thus lending the project a certain testimonial character. Similarly, the shifting visualizations of specific details in the portrayed room are all based on the before-mentioned recordings with the refugees on site. In this way, both the levels of image and voice in *This Room* seem to obey to the laws of coincidence, providing the observer at first sight with the impression that there is a clear connection between the work's simulated space and the recounted reminiscences of the narrators.

— Taking a closer look and listening carefully, however, it becomes apparent that the relationship between the two is somewhat more complicated. For instance, the act of remembrance is revealed as an unstable and porous process. As Malinovski states in an article about the artistic process (Malinovski 2019: 104), both the recounted stories and the depicted spatial scenarios in *This Room* are based on conversations with a group of refugees. Also, they take form from roughly sketched maps of the rooms through which they have passed and which the artist has subsequently asked them to draw. These maps, however, were not produced so as to provide an exact and complete overview of the rooms in question. Rather, they were intended to function as triggers stimulating the personal memory processes of the participating refugees. The approach thus allowed them to focus selectively on specific situations, locations, physical experiences, emotional reactions as well as imagined and dreamed sequences that they considered to be of special importance to them. The artist's choice for this methodological approach attributes the project with a subjective as well as selective *modus operandi*. Moreover, one might argue that the memory-based project contributes to a certain destabilization of conventional documentary practices. A case in point is a sequence in which one of the narrators, pausing momentarily and then continuing his recount in a slightly hesitant voice, explicates that his memory of his room in the camp – where he stayed for several years, but where he no longer resides – may be fraught with potential holes: “If this was my room, I’m trying to remember... there was a bunk bed here”.¹⁰⁾

— Upon closer inspection, it also becomes evident that the work's visualizations do not yield to objective and authoritative exposés based on traditional regimes of documentary truth telling. Thus, *This Room*'s imagery does not seek to convey transparency, nor does it attempt to create an immersive and seemingly realistic environment so as to facilitate a frictionless transfer of the observer to the refugee camp in question. If desired, such an effect could in fact have easily been obtained by means of the employed virtual reality technology.¹¹⁾ Instead, however, Malinovski chooses to visualize the recounted memories in the installation by initially presenting the room by means of a processual drawing of white lines on a black background. Thus, the installation emphatically emphasizes the provisional, tentative and sketch-like character of the pictorial memories, before gradually turning them into simulations characterized by more detailed, colour saturated and three-dimensional reality effects.

10) Quote from the beginning of *This Room* 00:00:28,700 – 00:00:34,600.

11) This is evident, for example, when observing how influential media houses have recently become increasingly interested in employing virtual reality technologies as a means to create so-called *immersive journalism*. See Marcelle Hopkins, “Pioneering Virtual Reality and New Video Technologies in Journalism”, *The New York Times*, 19 October 2017.

— Summing up, *This Room* can be said to confront the condition of those confined to life in the camps by destabilizing documentary conventions. It remains invested with an undetermined excess precisely by the rejection of representation's realism, a resistance that the use of virtual animation also exemplifies, intimating a visual field beyond the supposedly transparent documentary. Paraphrasing T.J. Demos *This Room* can thus be said to "offer representations of conflict as much as a conflict of representations" (Demos 2013: 171). In other words, it gives expression to the refugees' tragic experiences of the camps as sites as contact and conflict zones, while simultaneously emphasizing the fact that representation is ultimately unable to capture such experiences in their fullness and directness. The resulting documentary-fictions of the refugees' traumatizing experiences of being stuck between destinations in a refugee camp interweave the factual and the imaginary registers of the image in order to create a critical political effect. But how is it possible to artistically represent life that is severed from political representation such as in the here discussed case of the current situation of refugees in Europe? And how, one may ask subsequently, can the creative configuration of *This Room's* connection to politics be said to constitute an oppositional force directed against the undemocratic and exclusionary policies of the EU in regard to its noncitizen residents? These are questions that I will address in the following.

COUNTERING VICTIMIZATION IN SPACES OF CONFLICT —

Malinowski's virtual reality installation contributes to the invention of new paradigms of truth based upon the admission of subjective constructions and the development of both the image's and the sound's affective economy. Traditional documentary conventions are thus de- and reconstructed in various ways, for example by introducing subjectively reflexive narrative approaches, by over-layering multiple voices so as to create a polyphonic soundscape describing life in the camp from different – and at times conflicting – perspectives, by inserting poetic pauses and moments of stillness as a means to evoke a sense of opacity, and by using virtual reality technologies to simulate a complex room composed of various superimposed locations, that are disjunct rather than coinciding in time, thereby activating the trope of the palimpsest.

— As a paradigmatic example of *This Room's* fruitful cross-fertilizations of fact and fiction one might mention the last scene in the work in which two of the recounting refugees – in a multi-

voiced, rhythmically edited sequence and saxophone accompanied sequence – reflect on how being close to and listening to the sound of the sea at times made their stay in the camp slightly more bearable by creating hope of possible new beginnings. On the visual level, the here described sequence is supplemented by images of a diminutive and spatially secluded room in the camp whose walls suddenly seem to dissolve so as to reveal an open view of the sea. Far from testifying to the dubious nature of visually based truths, I will argue that a scene such as this makes evident that a profound understanding of reality, particularly a traumatic one, necessitates an engagement with the fictional and conflictual aspects of images. Such effects can, of course, be obtained by means of various media. Virtual reality, however, not in the least when employed experimentally as in the case of *This Room*, appears ideally suited as a medium to address the complex layers of such sites of conflict as the camps, sites torn between the demands for refugees' rights and the increasingly exclusionary political pressures to control and prevent the movements of non-citizen residents.

— Seeking to address such conflictual issues, and not in the least when working on artistic projects that take an explicitly critical and political stance, I am of the opinion that it becomes pertinent to avoid reaffirming the excluded as victimized objects of representation. Otherwise, such projects paradoxically tend to reiterate the relations of inequality they are otherwise trying to contest. In the case of Malinowski's *This Room* the above-mentioned challenge has obviously led to the renegotiation of documentary strategies of representation in order to avoid such objectification. Malinowski's project counteracts frequently reproduced views of refugees living in camps. It avoids both the ethnographic gaze and the compassionate depiction of victims that is often associated with conventional documentary practices, for example by side-stepping the possibility of visually portraying the refugees recounting their experiences of living in camps. Instead, it makes an active contribution to the formulation of alternative narratives and representation techniques that deliberately set out to avoid such objectifications. For example, by providing a platform for articulating often overlooked and overheard stories, as in the cases of refugees explaining how they create solidary alliances in order to ensure each other's safety, telling about their plans for studying Danish and starting an education or recounting how they actively – although with great difficulties, and at all odds – seek to create a sense of homeliness for small children in the camp.¹²⁾ In cases such as these, the installation can be said to contribute to

12) Here it should be noted that although the project evidently seeks to avoid objectifying the refugees as victims it nevertheless tends to reinforce gender-stereotypical representations in some of the above-mentioned cases, for example when letting a male refugee talk about his future educational ambitions and a female refugee recount of her straining attempt to nurture and take care of her child in the camp.

the invention of empowering types of storytelling that analyse and challenge the potential reduction of the portrayed to disenfranchised existences.

— Similarly, the refugees involved in the work are partners in conversation rather than merely interview subjects. Despite the obvious precariousness of their situation they clearly possess agency. This was further emphasized when some of the refugees took on the role of mediators and active discussion partners with viewers and bypassing travellers in connection with the presentation of the project at Copenhagen Central Station. Agency is an important aspect of the work, to which I will return later in this article. Taking this into account, Malinovski's work can be seen as exemplary in exposing the Danish refugee policies' lack of solidarity and insistence on maintaining unequal power relations. It does so, not by reaffirming views of refugees as victims, but on the contrary by creating a platform for the articulation of alternative narratives, positions to speak from, and visions for the future.

A RADICAL DEMOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE ON PUBLIC SPACES — As mentioned previously, *This Room* was presented at several sites, namely at *KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces*, in connection with a debate at the Danish Newspaper *Information* and at Copenhagen Central Station. Seeking to activate the project in this way in a series of different – and, as in the case of the Copenhagen Central Station, highly contested – public spaces clearly links to an ambition of contributing to the creation of democratically engaging contact and conflict zones.¹³⁾ In order to further reflect on the encounters staged in connection with the presentation of *This Room* at Copenhagen Central Station, where the by far broadest spectrum of social, cultural and economic positions came into contact, both with the guides on site and with each other, I introduce Chantal Mouffe's concept of so-called *agonistic spaces* (Mouffe 2013: 91–94). This concept enables me to analyse the conflictual aspect of the project's presentation within this contested and power-charged space within a radical democratic context. On the one hand it helps me to draw the attention towards the critical and political potential of staging situations of dissensus with regard to the current refugee crisis, and on the other it enables me to reflect on the importance of the specific premises on which such situations are played out.

— According to Mouffe's reflections on what she terms radical and pluralistic democracy, public spaces are permeated by exclusionary power relations (Mouffe 2005a and Mouffe 2007). Mouffe points out that a fully functional public space has to be able to

13) The term *contact zone* was originally coined by the post-colonial theorists Mary Louise Pratt and James Clifford in the 1990s and has since then resulted in an increased focus on how museums institutions can be said to function as contested social spaces. Pratt and Clifford describe contact zones as spaces, in which diverse social and cultural positions come into contact and have to be negotiated, thus challenging notions of a singular, coherent and harmoniously coexisting general public, see Clifford (1997) and Pratt (1991).

accept antagonisms, since it is created through the constant negotiation of different – often antagonistic – points of view. From a social perspective, antagonism can be defined as the limit of a given sociality's capacity to constitute itself as a coherent whole. In summary, by use of the concept of antagonism, Mouffe seeks to criticize the idea of public space as a sphere of consensus and harmonious coexistence.

— As Mouffe states, it is necessary to view and practice public space as a pluralistic space where divergent subject positions are not seen as enemies but as so-called *adversaries* whose legitimate existence should be acknowledged, but whose views can rightfully be disputed. By introducing the concept of the adversaries – understood as responsive opponents – Mouffe is able to clarify the concept of antagonism in a productive way. On the one hand she uses the concept of antagonism in the original sense of the word, referring to the conflict between two irreconcilable enemies who share no symbolic space. But she also introduces the term *agonism*, by which she refers to the conflict between responsive adversaries who are positive towards each other because they share a symbolic space, but who still fight against each other because they want to understand, interpret and administer this space in different ways. On the basis of this distinction between antagonism and agonism, Mouffe concludes that an *agonistic* public space has to take the form of a constant struggle to transform antagonism to agonism (Mouffe 2009: 102-103). Consequently, she sees antagonism and conflict as indispensable. How to deal with conflict, and how to deal with this antagonism are, according to Mouffe, the key issues in contemporary public spaces that we need to constantly address (ibid: 139).

ART IN CONFLICT ZONES: NAVIGATING THE BORDERS BETWEEN ANTAGONISM AND AGONISM

— Returning to *This Room's* thematization and actualization of the so-called 'refugee crisis', the question which arises in this specific context is of course, whether conflict situations arose during the project's staging at Copenhagen Central Station, and if so, how they were played out. Placing the installation at Copenhagen Central Station, i.e. at a contested site where previous conflicts and negotiations regarding the 'refugee crisis' had taken place, antagonistic encounters were obviously anticipated. This was one of the reasons why it was collectively decided that the mediators would always be present, two at a time, so as to ensure potential backup and support in the case of confrontational situations. As noted before, contact zones are power-charged

spaces, where actors interact on radically different terms, and since the refugees taking on the role of mediators inhabit a precarious situation, precautions were taken so as to secure their position accordingly. Another point of consideration was the ensuring of a certain heterogeneity on the part of the mediators present at the station with regard to gender, transnational backgrounds and situated points of perspective as either refugees currently living in camps, museum workers or volunteers from refugee organisations. This was given priority in order to encourage as many different bypassing travellers as possible to engage in conversations on site: A strategy which seemed to work according to the plan given that a very broad spectrum of people chose to approach the installation and enter into dialogue with the mediators.

— Luckily, no antagonistic encounters ended up taking place between irreconcilable enemies seeking to eradicate one another. Indeed, most of the conversations took place between sympathetically inclined and politically aligned mediators and passing travellers. Several participants explained that they had refugee backgrounds themselves and had lived in similar camps. Local employees from the National Railway Company recounted that they had often been in contact with refugees at the station back in 2015 and they reflected on how the installation had triggered their memories of these encounters and heightened their awareness of the refugees' current situation in the camps. Commuters from Sweden were keen to discuss differences between Danish and Swedish reactions to the 'refugee crisis'. Also, groups of teenagers were curious to learn about the practical aspects of living in the camp of *Avnstrup*. Regarding this last group, however, mediators subsequently reported being struck by their almost total lack of knowledge about Danish asylum policies and the current conditions of refugees living in camps: A case in point which clearly poses a problem from a democratic point of view and which – on a more personal level – distressed the mediators on site, not least the ones with refugee backgrounds themselves.

— More affective encounters also took place at the station. For example, a young woman, who had recently experienced a break-up, tear-brokenly explained that the work had made her realize how her former boyfriend's traumatizing experiences of living in a camp had in many – often unarticulated and unacknowledged – ways impacted their relationship. Other participants



Fig. 3: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces. © Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Anders Sune Berg

were also emotionally affected by the work and started asking questions about the possibilities of becoming involved as volunteers in the on-site represented refugee organisations. They were thus informed about the practical possibilities of joining DFUNK and CAMP, just as they were made aware of an upcoming demonstration in support of the children staying at the highly contested refugee camp of Sjølsmark.¹⁴⁾

— There were, however, also discussions of a more conflictual and confrontational character that were played out at the station. For example, a male viewer with refugee background criticized the installation project for being too negative in its depiction of life in the camps. He stated that *This Room* failed to portray some of the more positive aspects of living in the camps, which he himself had experienced upon his arrival to Denmark, and he argued that the project would most probably end up promoting the idea of refugees as being ungrateful, thus contributing to intensifications and radicalizations of anti-immigrant sentiments in the Danish society. Also, as another case in point, a participant voting for *Dansk Folkeparti* – a national conservative party fighting for enforced border control, stop of immigration and implementations of restrictive asylum policies – entered into a heated debate with one of the mediators after having seen the work. In this case, the participant felt provoked by the project's topic and argued for a total future stop to immigration, although he reasoned – after having watched the virtual reality work – that it might be necessary to somehow improve the conditions for the refugees currently living in the camps.

— In accordance with Mouffe's use of the term *agonism*, the participants in the here mentioned cases – as in several others – did not reject the project categorically, but instead chose to experience the work and to successively engage in a debate with one of the mediators on site. They listened to each other's arguments, thus acknowledging the opponent's legitimate existence and right to be heard, but they nevertheless chose to contest each other's positions ideas because they understood, interpreted and acted upon the current situation of the refugees in radically different ways. As these examples indicate, *This Room* also generated debates and staged situations of dissent where divergent – and clearly opposed – subject positions were articulated and negotiated.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING PARTISAN — Drawing on radical democracy theory, I have hitherto argued that artistic, curatorial and activist forms of critique necessitate the creation of agonistic

14) For more information see Marronage (2018): "Manifestation: Support the Children in Sjølsmark": <https://www.dukop.dk/events/5171?locale=da> (20 May 2019)

contact zones in which negotiations can be played out and counter-hegemonic publics created. Following this line of thought, I will conclude by arguing that taking a critical approach also involves being partisan, i.e. it requires taking a political position. Artistic, curatorial and activist forms of critique can thus only seek to challenge the existing hegemony and produce lasting effects if they partake in what Mouffe terms “a progressive ‘collective will’ engaged in a ‘war of position’” (Mouffe 2013: 127).

— Both Pejk Malinovski as artist, the mediators at Copenhagen Central Station and I as curator took a position in relation to *This Room*, allowing for the staging of participatory and politically engaging contact and conflict zones. For example, in my curatorial reflections, that I have expanded on in talks and conference presentations, in internal working papers and in published articles, I have taken a clear political stance with regard to the ‘refugee crisis’. I have argued for more equal means of participation in today’s highly hierarchical mobility regime and contested the non-solidary and exclusionary policies of the EU in regard to its non-citizen residents. Malinovski, on his part, has produced a work that exposes and challenges the potential reduction that life in the camps entails, and on various discursive platforms he has furthermore stated that he views *This Room* as a critical response to that which he terms “the state sanctioned violence” currently being enforced in Danish refugee camps.¹⁵⁾ Last, but not least, the mediators at Copenhagen Central station have not only chosen to talk about Malinovski’s virtual reality installation and the curatorial context of the *Transit* exhibition, but also to discuss their own experiences, convictions and agendas as either refugees living in camps or as politically positioned volunteers from refugees’ organizations. Consequently, *This Room* enabled all those involved to take a position, which – paraphrasing the educator and curator Nora Sternfeld – was “not exclusionary, but also not at all neutral, but rather dissentual and convincing” (Sternfeld 2011).

— Which effects exactly the project will generate on a longer-term basis is, of course, impossible to determine at this moment of writing. What is evident, however, is that *This Room* has mounted a political challenge by making audible those persons typically excluded from globalisation’s imaginary. Besides, it has stirred debates on various platforms about the current state of affairs in Danish refugee camps. In short, it has demonstrated that forcing refugees to remain stuck between destinations, unable to go either back or forward, is not a natural condition,

15) Malinovski used this term both in an interview broadcast on national radio, namely *Kulturen på P1* on 11 September 2018, and during a debate organized in connection with the *Transit* exhibition at Information on 5 March 2019.

but rather a political effect of globalisation. In other words, the condition is negotiable and therefore potentially open towards the envisioning and creation of more solidary scenarios in the future.

// Image Credits

Fig. 1: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at Copenhagen Central Station.

© Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Ole Bo Jensen

Fig. 2: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at Copenhagen Central Station.

© Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Ole Bo Jensen

Fig. 3: Installation shot of Pejk Malinovski's *This Room* at KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces.

© Pejk Malinovski. Photo: Anders Sune Berg

// References

- Balibar, Étienne (2004): *We the people of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton NJ, University Press
- Clifford, James (1997): *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press
- Dahl Nielsen, Sabine (2019a): *Multi-Sited Curating as a Critical Mode of Knowledge Production*. In: Vest Hansen, Malene / Folke Henningsen, Anne / Gregersen, Anne (eds.), *Curatorial Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Contemporary Curating*. Abingdon & New York, Routledge, pp. 79–93
- Dahl Nielsen, Sabine (2019b): *Flow and Friction in the Crisis of Globalisation: Negotiating Mobility and Migration Politics at Public Transit Sites*. In: Dahl Nielsen, Sabine (eds.), *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalisation*. Aalborg, University Press, pp. 41–57
- Dahl Nielsen, Sabine / Ulrikke Neergaard / Ida Højgaard Thjøemøe (2018), *Transit* (exhibition folder). Køge, KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces
- Demos, T.J (2013): *The Migrant Image. The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis*. Durham & London, Duke University Press
- Hopkins, Marcelle (2017): *Pioneering Virtual Reality and New Video Technologies in Journalism*. In: *The New York Times*, 19 October 2017
- Malinovski, Pejk (2019): *This Room – Some thoughts on the process*. In: Dahl Nielsen, Sabine (eds.), *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalisation*. Aalborg, University Press
- Mouffe, Chantal (2005a): *Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices*. https://readingpublicimage.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/chantal_mouffe_cork_caucus.pdf (20 May 2019)
- Mouffe, Chantal (2005b): *On the political*. London & New York, Routledge
- Mouffe, Chantal (2009): *The Democratic Paradox*. London, Verso
- Mouffe, Chantal (2013): *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London, Verso
- O'Neill, Paul / Doherty, Claire (2011): *Locating the Producers – Durational Approaches to Public Art*. Amsterdam, Valiz
- Pratt, Mary Louise (1991): *Arts of the Contact Zone*. In: *Profession*, pp. 33–40
- Sternfeld, Nora (2011): *Memorial Sites as Contact Zones: Cultural Memory in a Shared/Divided Present*. <http://eipcp.net/policies/sternfeld/en> (29 March 2019)
- Warner, Michael (1958): *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York, Zone Books

// About the Author

Sabine Dahl Nielsen is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Copenhagen where she is currently working on a project entitled *Togetherness in Difference: Reimagining identities, communities and histories through art*. Dahl Nielsen's Ph.D. project *Art in Urban Public Spaces: Conflicts and Negotiations as Critical Spatial Practices* was conducted at KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen in 2015, and during her Ph.D. she was a member of the Curatorial Knowledge research network at Goldsmiths, University of London. In 2018 Dahl Nielsen curated a research exhibition at KØS Museum of Art in Public Spaces entitled *Transit: Art, Mobility and Migration in the Age of Globalization*. Furthermore, she has contributed with topic related articles to a wide range of Danish and International journals, anthologies, and exhibition catalogues.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann / www.fkw-journal.de

// License

This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



ESCAPING THE ECHO CHAMBER: PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRANT REPRESENTATIONS IN THE EXHIBITION SPACE

The discussion of migrations in the western European public sphere seems to have reached a peak since the beginning of the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015. In response a growing number of artists and curators have been using their works to express concern regarding the current situation over the past years.¹⁾ Within this context, where a large amount of discourse is being produced, one could notice that representations, either political, journalistic or even artistic, have tended to focus primarily on the figure of the ‘refugee’, a term evoking, in the words of Bishupal Limbu, either “the image of a large mass of people linked [...] to international humanitarian aid,” (Limbu 2009: 268) in order to advocate for humanitarian help, or in other cases as “an overwhelming influx of unwanted persons” (ibid.) to promote stricter border control. Either way, the constant repetition of these discourses creates a phenomenon of echo chambers, empty bubbles in which one is only confronted with information corroborating one’s own perspective, oversimplifying a much more complex phenomenon, namely migrations in their diverse contemporary forms.

— The term *refugee*, originally an administrative term used to distinguish asylum seekers whose claims have been officially approved, and who as a result received access to a residence permit, has been increasingly used as an all-encompassing word to designate migrants trying to enter Europe. In contemporary political discourses ‘refugee’ is being used to name individuals leaving their countries because of persecution, regardless of administrative status, constituted in opposition to the so called ‘economic migrants,’ having to leave their countries because of economic pressure and poor living conditions.²⁾ Consequently, the term refugee in part of the contemporary public discourses has arguably been used to create a dichotomy between people considered as good, ‘deserving’ migrants, and bad, or at least ‘undeserving’ ones.³⁾ To avoid this pitfall this article prefers the term migrant, as a broader word to describe individuals having left a country to establish themselves in another, either temporarily or permanently.⁴⁾ A large number of cultural institutions in Europe have been launching various programs and exhibitions to evoke the current situation of ‘refugees’ in Europe. While empathetic approaches highlighting the difficult living conditions of these

1) A famous example is Ai Weiwei’s film *Human Flow* (2017), similarly many various cultural institutions have been organizing exhibitions on the theme of migrations or exhibiting artists working on this theme such as *The Humanity House* in The Hague.

2) As an example see the definition of ‘economic migrant’ on the European Commission’s website, which mentions the two terms to establish the difference between them: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/economic-migrant_en.

3) For further discussion on terminologies and their significances, see Carastathis, Kouri-Towe, Mahrouse and Whitley (2018: 3–4).

4) Although the category of people considered as ‘expats’ falls under this broad definition they will not be considered in this article because they are in discourses and in practices considered distinct by their racial and class privileges. In the Netherlands for instance they constitute a different administrative category determined by income or profession.

migrants are often privileged, the exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber: Questioning Myths, Facts and Framings of Migration*, presented at the Framer Framed Gallery in Amsterdam from April 29th to June 3rd 2016, choose to focus on the notion of discourse itself. Curated by Katayoun Arian and articulated around a series of thirteen works, for the most part created before 2015, the exhibition attempted to deconstruct the representations made of migrant populations in Europe, and to challenge the idea of a ‘refugee crisis’ by focusing on the long-term and systemic issues at play within the European border control system.

— Considering the political implications of its discourse, *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* also took part in a broader ongoing dialogue between art, politics and activism, interrogating the artist’s role in relation to society. Through the analysis of two artworks presented during the exhibition, Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson’s audio sculpture *Bosbolobosboco #6 (Departure-Transit-Arrival)* and Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s *Conflicted Phonemes* this article will aim to discuss and question the narrativisation of migrants’ stories, focusing particularly on the mediation and reception of such narratives. As the two works present radically different perspective on the representation of migrations and migrant people, this article will propose a critical understanding of the different strategies they adopt, and how such strategies might impact social praxis.

EMPATHETIC REPRESENTATIONS — One of the strategies often used by contemporary artists to discuss migrations, and direct the public’s attention towards the idea of an urgent humanitarian crisis that needs solving, is to emphasize on the notion of empathy; in doing so artists often choose to rely on the evocation of individuals’ experiences. This is the case in Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson’s 2014 audio sculpture *Bosbolobosboco #6 (Departure-Transit-Arrival)*, the sixth work in a series of sculptures gathering audio montages concerned with various themes. This particular one focuses on experiences of migrations, as it invites visitors to take place in a biomorphic structure [fig. 1] and listen to an assemblage of migrants’ personal testimonies. The audio describing these departures and migrations, is supposed to be heard through a process of ‘deep listening’, according



Fig. 1: Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson, *Bosbolobosboco*, 2014

to the exhibition guide, encouraging visitors to relax and identify with the stories heard (Exhibition Guide *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* 2016: 4). The work aims at producing empathy in the visitor, creating a link between the individuals sharing their stories and the listeners. It was produced in collaboration with the Sydney based collective *The Refugee Art Project*, its cofounder and artist Safdar Ahmed, and a psychologist, Nina Melksham, who can be heard guiding the reminiscences of the four contributors identified by their first names, Asif, Hadi, Mona and Shokufa, sharing memories of their journeys to Australia. As explained in the exhibition guide, the work aimed to resist voyeurism by having visitors relax and identify with the stories heard, in order to contribute to a form of “collective memory” (ibid.). In doing so, the artwork raises the issue of the narrativisation of migrants’ experiences and the use of identification as an artistic strategy, particularly considering how such approaches have been increasingly put at the forefront of contemporary socially engaged arts.

THE NARRATIVISATION OF MIGRATIONS — Considering that the exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* dealt primarily with the notion of discourse and its impacts, one of the first questions coming to mind concerns the conditions of enunciation in the artworks: who’s voices shall be heard? How so? Who will listen to them? As the work *Bosbolobosboco* relies primarily on individuals’ stories of migration, its analysis will allow us to explore issues raised by the narrativisation of migrations, meaning the representation of migrations through the narration of individual migrants’ stories.

— In *Bosbolobosboco* whose voices shall be heard? The work is the product of collaboration between the artists, a psychologist, and the individuals sharing their stories, resulting in a several hours long audio montage. Migrant people are the ones telling their stories; however, the artists remain the intermediaries between the participating individuals and the listener. The presence of a psychologist whom we can hear asking questions and directing the exchange also contributes to shifting the narrative in certain directions. The work is committed to offering a safe space of expression to evoke traumatic experiences, and the psychologist uses relaxation methods and memory visualization, while regularly asking the participants if they wish to continue the interview when the memories recalled become overwhelming. As the audio exchange goes along the psychologist invites the interviewed to visualize and describe specific scenes, which they link

to the notion of departure, transit or arrival. All the participants describe scenes concerning parting with loved ones; some also explain the anxiety felt when leaving one's home and the difficulties of adjusting to new places. One of the participants also mentions his journey on a boat and its dangers, while another talks about being placed in a detention centre in Australia. These last two experiences are shared by the male participants while the female ones quite stereotypically focus on parting with their loved ones and seeing their dreams and envisioned futures shattered. One of them explains being only 6 at the time, while the other focuses on a particular memory at the airport. Overall the exchanges evoke specific moments which encapsulate feelings of displacement, and loss for the participants. The exhibition guide repeatedly uses the term trauma and explains that: "The sculpture is a testimony of the struggle of displacement, from before the departure to the arrival, and the journey's lasting traumatic effects." (ibid.)

—— Personal testimonies evoking trauma and resilience are commonly used in discourses about migrations by non-profits aiming at bettering migrants' living conditions and by artists supporting this cause. Although there is no denying the legitimacy of these testimonies, it is striking to me that the vast majority of works I have been confronted with over the past 4–5 years had such a strong focus on refugees and narratives of trauma alone. In a western European context, where the name FRONTEX (the European border control agency) is very rarely mentioned in public discourses, and its actual practices even less, such a general over reliance on personal testimonies of suffering and resilience raises questions on the ability for such narratives to actually be transformative for society. As explained by Agnes Woolley in her 2016 article, to obtain a refugee status, asylum seekers must offer a convincing account of the persecutions they had to flee, and prove the sincerity of their claim. As the author explains: "the process relies heavily on the self-presentation of the individual claimant; their ability to convince an immigration officer or a judge. The claimant must narrate themselves into a position of legitimacy." (Woolley 2016:5). Considering the reliance of the administrative process on asylum seekers' ability to prove that they have been persecuted, it is striking that a large number of artworks, including *Bosbolobosboco*, focus their discussions on similar traumatic events lived by migrants. Even when evoking memories of a detention centre for instance, the emphasis is put on the individual's emotions and lasting trauma, because the aim of the work

is to work through this trauma rather than offer explanations on the border control system. In that sense, the work's framing of migrants' narratives paradoxically parallels the framing used during administrative processes.

— Emphasizing the hardships and traumatic events migrants had to go through might, even unintentionally, support the idea that refugee status, and by extension acceptance in society, needs to be deserved. Although the idea of sympathizing with people's stories seems a positive step taken by artists to change visitors' perspectives on current debates about migrations, it might fail to critically deconstruct discourses, as the exhibition proposed to do, and even reinforce the particular narratives migrant people are cornered into due to the exclusionary logic of the border control system. Through its empathetic strategy *Bosbolobosboco*, like other artworks using similar methods, might paradoxically also participate to a broader frame in which migrants are only considered as legitimate speakers when recounting personal stories of hardship, making it difficult for individuals to be heard when producing a discourse which does not fit this particular framing. As migrants' narratives remain limited to trauma and victimhood, legitimate social and political claims remain unaddressed and unrecognized.

— Finally, although exhibitions spaces like *Framer Framed*, Amsterdam, aim at reaching the largest audience possible, the majority of its visitors are however more likely to share certain perspectives on the arts, as well as social and political topics. As such, one should be careful to avoid re-creating a form of discourse that neglects individual agencies, falling into an already existing consensual discourse, and in doing so reproducing its own 'echo chamber'.

ETHICS OF EMPATHY AND IDENTIFICATION — Despite the issues raised by the narrativisation of migrant stories, the artwork *Bosbolobosboco* nonetheless confronts us with individuals offering first-hand accounts of their experiences. As such, totally dismissing the work because of its intrinsic limitations still poses a problem. The artwork presents us with first-hand audio testimonies, and although these can, and should be, analyzed critically, fully dismissing them would also be a form of silencing of migrant people. In fact, could the work still allow us, even ever so slightly, to shift perspectives on migrations and potentially transform social praxis?

— According to the exhibition text, *Bosbolobosboco* invites visitors to "position themselves in the place of the observed"

(Exhibition Guide: Echo Chamber 2016: 4). In *Bosbolobosboco*, the idea sustaining the work is that through listening to stories, one will be able to appropriate them as part of a larger, collective story, and visitors will be better able to sympathize with migrant people, which will perhaps change their views on migrations and the public policies that concern them. The idea of appropriating someone else's traumatic memories, in order to enrich a larger collective memory, raises some issues. Indeed, such appropriation prompts viewers to abolish the differences between the self and the other, potentially casting aside elements of the other's personhood in the process, to appropriate and consume experiences as, if not one's own, at least communal ones.

— One could also wonder about the possibilities for relaxation in a gallery space that visitors navigate and cross at all times. While listeners are invited to take place and lay inside the biomorphic sculpture, the stories that are heard are actually ones of displacement and hardship, they are highly emotional and listeners witness the difficulty participants have in recalling such memories. As such, relaxation seems like a fairly paradoxical goal to attain. However, the process of physically entering and laying in the sculpture, attempting, even forcing oneself, to relax while listening to the audio, forces the visitor to confront the testimonies, and to physically and emotionally commit to hearing them.

— In their introduction to the *Rhetoric of Sincerity* Ernst van Alphen and Mieke Bal explain that: “traditionally sincerity [is understood] as natural enactment of authenticity, anchored in, and yielding truth, considered as fundamentally corporeal rather than textual” (van Alphen and Bal 2009:1). The corporeality of the concept of sincerity that van Alphen and Bal are alluding to is central to the ways migrant discourses are heard and analyzed. Throughout audition processes, and similarly in public and artistic discourses, individuals have to prove the authenticity of their claims by making convincing testimonies, and in doing so, by *performing* sincerity, through self-presentation, or even by showing bodily evidence such as scars (Woolley 2016:5). In a sense, *Bosbolobosboco* is able to shift this particular understanding of sincerity concerning testimonies of migrations, as the sculpture calls for the listener to become the one whose body is activated. In the work, the visitors' physicality, and his/her reactions, are central, and the identification process, along with the emotions it might elicit are at the core of the work. More than bearing witness, the listener is asked to take in the stories he/she hears as shared ones, and to some extent participate in the work of sincerity by

committing to relive one's accounts as one's own, engaging one's body and emotions in doing so. By following the deep relaxation techniques that punctuate the testimonies, visitors are invited to appropriate the stories heard and paradoxically to take on an active posture by committing to them through these relaxation techniques. Although the work does not escape the issues posed by its reliance on narratives of trauma and its appropriative strategy, it might simultaneously allow for a shift in one's understanding of migrant testimonies, through the active commitment it requires from its public.

CONFLICTED PHONEMES: ARTS AND ACTIVISM — Lawrence Abu Hamdan's *Conflicted Phonemes*, displayed during the *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* exhibition, is a vinyl wall print [fig. 2] from 2012, accompanied by nine charts printed on papers [fig. 3] visitors could take home. The work analyzed the little-known language analysis tests introduced by the Dutch immigration authorities to determine the asylum seeker status of Somali immigrants before 2012. These tests analyzed the accents of asylum seekers in order to determine their regions of origin, and consequently decide if they could 'legitimately' obtain a refugee status. As northern regions of Somalia were considered as safer than other parts of the country, individuals determined to be originating from these sectors were consequently denied the asylum seeker status, unlike the people whose accents seemed to indicate that they came from the southern parts of the country. The tests were conducted by a private Swedish company, over a recorded phone interview from which a small number of words were extracted to then be analyzed (Abu Hamdan and Mircan 2012).

— In response to these tests Abu Hamdan worked in collaboration with 12 Somali asylum seekers, as well as researchers, linguists, activists and a graphic designer, to create a graphic chart of the evolutions and transformations of the Somali language and its accents (Exhibition Guide: Echo Chamber 2016:2). The chart recalls the complexity of Somalia's history, its different heritages, including that of the colonial period, and their impacts on the various accents and locutions present in the country. Doing so,

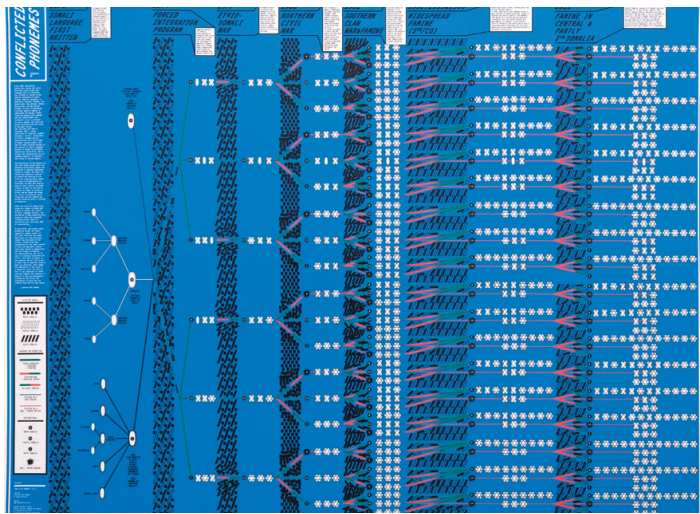


Fig. 2: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Conflicted Phonemes*, 2012



it underlies the artificiality of the immigration authorities' accent test. Furthermore, while the vast majority of Abu Hamdan's works rely on explorations of sound, *Conflicted Phonemes* advocates for a right to silence by radically refusing to include speech, either in the form of migrant testimonies or voices in the work, which remains limited to visual charts and diagrams.⁵⁾ Through its exploration of the complexity of language formation, understood as a dynamic process of exchanges, transformations and hybridity, the chart illustrates the arbitrariness of the language tests carried by the immigration office. Doing so, it also highlighted the little-known bureaucratic processes and methods used by migratory control systems, and made them available to the public. In that sense, *Conflicted Phonemes* offers a relevant take on the representation of migrations, as it opens up the discussion by putting the spotlight on particular border control policies which usually remain broadly unknown. As Abu Hamdan's work opens up discourses on migration, it also raises the question of the impact of art on the political sphere.

Fig. 3: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Conflicted Phonemes*, 2012, installation view of the Framed exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber*, Amsterdam (2016)

5) In the artwork *Contra Diction: Speech Against Itself* from 2016 Abu Hamdan further explores and explains how he understands the right to silence and its implications.

SPEECH, SILENCE AND SINCERITY — With *Conflicted Phonemes*, the artist explores how forensic linguistics is used to determine identity, citizenship and places of origin. Through the practice of accent testing, one's voice becomes a tool from which a legal truth is derived. While such practice focuses on the corporeal aspect of speech, content is considered superficial. In that sense, the work represents a fairly literal application of the notion of sincerity as explained earlier. Indeed, the claimant's body becomes scrutinized for traces of an inner truth, an accent which would link back to one's place of origin. In that sense the body's manifestations are seen as objective, and objectifiable, clues, spontaneously performing sincerity. The content of asylum seekers' speech is cast aside, and individuals are forced to perform a specific narrative, telling traumatic stories using intonations, postures, accents etc. that will convince the immigration authorities, whose decision can make the difference between life and death. Furthermore, the work illustrates the inherent issues lying in accent testing, showing how it ignores the dynamism of language, instead, wrongly considering one's way of speaking as statically reflecting one's supposedly fixed 'origin.' As the charts demonstrate the impacts of colonisation on the evolutions of the Somali languages, it is striking to notice the complete lack of acknowledgement of colonial history in both accent testing and the broader understanding of migrations.

— By shedding light on the assumptions the legal process of asylum seeking relies on, *Conflicted Phonemes* interrogates what is actually listened to when 'listening to the voices of migrants.' Beyond its critique of the border control processes, the work also interrogates the very idea of listening to migrants, and its collateral 'giving them a voice', especially present in humanistic discourses.⁶⁾ Either by insisting on narratives of trauma, or upon corporeal aspects of speech, migrant voices become co-opted to fit particular representations. This includes a number of projects and organisations which showcase migrants' testimonies, which while 'giving a voice' to individuals, nonetheless select and frame such testimonies so that they often follow a similar structure in their storytelling.⁷⁾ As Leonie Harsch notes in her 2018 article on the 2011 UN Refugee Agency communication campaign, the emphasis can be put on stories of hardship and resilience, in the hope that viewers will engage better with the testimonies, and perhaps change their views or even donate to the organization. By refusing to showcase voices or testimonies to evoke migrations, Abu Hamdan questions what we as a public are expecting, or are willing, to hear and reflect upon when listening to migrants' voices.

6) The discussion of this concept is also central within feminist scholarship; see for instance Mohanty (1984) and Spivak (1988).

7) As an example see Leonie Harsch's 2018 analysis of the UN Refugee Agency communication campaign <https://refugeehosts.org/2018/01/08/giving-refugees-a-voice-looking-beyond-refugee-stories/>

ART, ACTIVISM AND DEMOCRACY — The choice made by Abu Hamdan to share information on particular border control policies with the public, while radically excluding voices or personal testimonies from his work, seems particularly effective in criticising the narrativisation of migrant experiences. Considering how obscure border control systems tend to be for the public at large, informing European and especially Dutch citizens visiting the exhibition space on the particular policies their states enact is a relevant method to open up debates on the topic of migrations and transform the ways migrations are perceived and talked about. While all works evoking migrations bring topics to the attention of the public, focusing on actual policies allows individuals to discuss concrete political issues. Doing so makes viewers aware of their citizen status, and encourages them to pay attention to the concrete legal and political stances taken in their countries. Rather than focusing on broader ideas and concepts, which at times might make individuals feel overwhelmed and unable to act, the work targets specific policies which can be changed or repealed. Although information does not necessarily mean taking action, knowing about practical laws and procedures can however open up discussions in society on concrete issues upon which citizenship has a direct impact. Nevertheless one can note the irony of having to efface migrant voices to actually talk about the concrete issues they encounter when facing border control systems.

— Interestingly the work had an even more direct impact when it was presented before a chief judge working with the Dutch immigration authority, as well as at a deportation hearing at the United Kingdom Asylum tribunal (Exhibition Guide: Echo Chamber 2016: 2). Despite these and other hearings and appeals, accent testing carried over either by public or private institutions is still broadly used by various countries to this day, including but not limited to Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland and Australia.⁸⁾ The fact that the work *Conflicted Phonemes*, or perhaps more accurately the information it gathered and presented, was shown during official court hearings further illustrates the possibilities of focusing on particular policies. The work helped put the spotlight on the issues raised by accent testing, notably by showing the richness of languages and accents present in Somalia. Although the court ruled against these particular tests, the fact that slightly different versions of these soon replaced them highlights the limits encountered when presented considering the work within a different context, that of the trial. While *Conflicted Phonemes* might be able to impact viewers and citizens, the relative

⁸⁾ Academic articles concerning this topic are somewhat scarce; however Reath (2004) presents the general functioning of accent testing. If the reader is further interested, see also Mohdin (2015).

failure of the court hearing to take notice and make changes shows the difficulty of confronting the current regime.

ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION — The exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber: Questioning Myths, Facts and Framings of Migration* presented its visitors with various engaging viewpoints on the ways migrations and migrant people are represented in contemporary discourses, urging viewers to question and rethink such representations. Abu Hamdan's work *Conflicted Phonemes* does so precisely by interrogating the actual conditions of listening to migrants' speech. In that sense, the work simultaneously invites visitors of the exhibition to interrogate their own reception of the artworks on display. Comparing *Conflicted Phonemes* to Castro and Olafsson's *Bosbolobosboco*, one is inspired to question the ways one listens to and understands the audio sculpture and the testimonies presented. These testimonies, recounting personal stories of hardship and trauma, mirror the administrative narrative asylum seekers must follow in order to be perceived as legitimate. Claimants must prove that they are threatened in their countries of origin by recounting personal experiences to the immigration authorities while in the work individuals repeat their stories, adding the hardships they had to face during the administrative processes to underline the issues the later pose. While the narrativisation of migrants' experiences raises the problem of the limitations it puts on migrants' expressions, comparing the works *Bosbolobosboco* and *Conflicted Phonemes* allows us to further question what is being listened to when one is said to 'listen to the voices of migrants'. In that sense, the works viewed together bring the visitor to acknowledge the interpretative part of their reception of migrant's discourses, be it by questioning the act of listening to voices in *Conflicted Phonemes*, or by asking for a radical commitment to the stories from the listener in the work *Bosbolobosboco*.

// Image Credits

Fig. 1 : Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson, *Bosbolobosboco*, 2014, audio sculpture, wood, cardboard, fabric, tape, headphones, dimensions variable, Opening of the exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* at Framer Framed, Amsterdam (2016), photography: Marlise Steerman

Fig. 2: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Conflicted Phonemes*, 2012, vinyl wall print, 208x300 cm, Framer Framed *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber* exhibition guide, Amsterdam (2016), courtesy of Framer Framed

Fig. 3: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *Conflicted Phonemes*, 2012, 9 vinyl wall prints, A4, installation view of the Framer Framed exhibition *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber*, Amsterdam (2016), photography: Claire Jandot

// References

- Abu Hamdan, Lawrence / Mircan, Mihnea (2012): Conflicted Phonemes. <http://www.neromagazine.it/magazine/index.php?c=articolo&idart=1078&idnum=42&num=32> (March 5, 2019)
- Carastathis, Anna / Kouri-Towe, Natalie / Mahrouse, Gada / Whitley, Leila (2018): Introduction. In: *Refuge*. Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp. 3–15
- Exhibition Guide. *Voices Outside the Echo Chamber*. Framer Framed, Amsterdam, 2016
- Harsch, Leonie (2018): Giving Refugees a Voice? Looking Beyond 'Refugee Stories'. <https://refugeehosts.org/2018/01/08/giving-refugees-a-voice-looking-beyond-refugee-stories/> (April 2019)
- Limbu, Bishupal (2009): Illegible Humanity: The Refugee, Human Rights, and the Question of Representation. In: *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Vol. 22, Issue 3, pp. 257–282
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1984): Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In: *boundary*. Vol. 12, Issue 3, pp. 333–358
- Mohdin, Aamna (2015): After braving death to reach Europe, this is the final test refugees must pass to win asylum. <https://qz.com/508785/these-companies-use-language-to-determine-which-migrants-get-to-stay-in-europe-but-does-it-work/> (March 5, 2019)
- Reath, Anne (2004): Language Analysis in the Context of the Asylum Process: Procedures, Validity, and Consequences. In: *Language Assessment Quarterly: An International Journal*. Vol. 1, Issue 4, pp. 209–233
- Spivak, Gayatri (1988): Can the Subaltern Speak? In Nelson, Cary / Grossberg, Lawrence (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, pp. 271–313
- UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms: economic migrant. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/economic-migrant_en (March 5, 2019)
- Van Alphen, Ernst / Bal, Mieke (2009): Introduction. In: Van Alphen, Ernst / Bal, Mieke / Smith, Carel (eds.), *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*. Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, pp. 1–16
- Woolley, Agnes (2016): Narrating the 'Asylum Story': Between Literary and Legal Storytelling. In: *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. Vol. 19, Issue 3, pp.1–19

// About the Author

Claire Elisabeth Jandot has a Masters degree in Arts and Culture, for which she wrote a thesis on the display of historical African sculptures in French museums, with a particular focus on the Quai Branly, and the ways the institution negotiates the colonial history of its collections. She is currently finishing a research Master at Leiden University, working on representations of immigration in the context of the Museum of Immigration History, located in Paris, in the former Colonial Museum built in 1931.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Kooß / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann / www.fkw-journal.de

// License

This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



STIMME GEBEN, GEHÖR VERLEIHEN. KOLLABORATIVE DOKUMENTATIONEN UND DIE BEDINGUNGEN DER VERNEHMBARKEIT VON MIGRATION UND FLUCHT

Unmittelbar nach dem Sommer der Migration 2015 war in Ausstellungen und auf Filmfestivals ein großes Interesse für künstlerisch-ästhetische Reaktionen auf den Diskurs der ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ zu beobachten. Die Aufmerksamkeit für künstlerische Formen speiste sich zu diesem Zeitpunkt sicherlich auch aus der Erwartung auf Reflexionsgewinne und klare Einsichten durch kritische Abstände. Künstlerisch-dokumentarische Ansätze sind hingegen zu unmittelbar in die Bildpolitik und Bedeutungsproduktion von Migration und Flucht verwoben, um ihre kritischen Impulse nach wie vor aus der Distanzierung zu gewinnen.

Das Feld dokumentarischer Praxis ist selbst zu einer dichten Aushandlungszone geraten, in der sich ästhetische mit ethischen, politischen, ökonomischen und juristischen Dimensionen von Migration und Flucht überlagern.¹⁾ In dieser *politischen Ökologie dokumentarischer Praktiken*²⁾ finden audiovisuelle und handlungsmächtige Akte der Selbstdokumentation von Migrant*innen Eingang in tägliche Berichterstattungen und mediale Konstruktionen von Migration. Teil dieser politischen Ökologie des Dokumentarischen sind aber auch jene Prozeduren und Verfahren der Identifizierung, Registrierung und Kontrolle europäischer Migrationsregime³⁾, deren Ausgrenzungspraxis eben über die Dokumentation illegalisierter Migration organisiert ist.⁴⁾

Brigitta Kuster und Vassilis Tsianos verweisen – im Rückgriff auf Dennis Broeders Arbeit zu Überwachungstechnologien im europäischen Grenzraum (Broeders 2011) – darauf, dass Exklusion und „Registrierung bzw. Dokumentation“ eng ineinandergreifen im Rahmen einer als „digital deportability“ beschriebenen Ausdehnung und gleichzeitigen Deterritorialisierung europäischer Grenzen durch Datennetzwerke. (Kuster/Tsianos 2013: 9). Eine gewichtige Rolle spielen hierbei die Dokumentation und Speicherung biometrischer und visueller Daten zur Identifizierung.

Kritisch dokumentarische Formen sind daher nicht über reflexive Distanznahmen, sondern als situierte Praktiken zu denken, die in eine – durch Verfahren der Registrierung und Dokumentation ermöglichte – Politik der Sichtbarkeit von Migration intervenieren, ohne diese Politik in den eigenen audiovisuellen Verfahren zu reproduzieren.

1) Die komplexe Beziehung zwischen Dokumentarfilmen, dokumentarischen Bildern und der im Englischen auch als *undocumented* bezeichneten Formen illegalisierter Migration bilden auch den Ausgangspunkt von Jan Kühnemunds Studie, die u. a. die Möglichkeit filmischer Gegenentwürfe zu einer Imagination europäischer Grenzräume als „counter-topography“ diskutiert (Kühnemund 2018: 17).

2) In Anlehnung an Kate Nashs, Craig Rights und Catherine Summerhays Konzept der „documentary Ecologies“ (2014: 1f.), mit dem die Autor*innen auf die ‚neue‘ Konnektivität und Relationalität dokumentarischer Formen unter digitalen und medienökologischen Bedingungen reflektieren, möchte ich mit dem Begriff der *politischen Ökologie des Dokumentarischen* begleitende politische und ethische Aushandlungsprozesse mit in den Blick nehmen.

3) Zu einer einführenden Darstellung des Konzepts des „Migrationsregimes“ und der „ethnografischen Regimeanalyse“ vgl. Karakayalı/Tsianos (2007).

4) Wie Brigitta Kuster überzeugend argumentiert hat, sind bspw. dokumentarische Fernseh- und Filmproduktionen nicht lediglich als Darstellungen, sondern als „Reartikulationen von ‚Migration‘“ zu verstehen und daher „im Sinne einer gesellschaftlichen Konstruktionsleistung als konstitutive Teile des europäischen Migrationsregimes zu begreifen“ (Kuster 2007: 87).

— Im Folgenden möchte ich Formen und Arbeitsmodelle im Feld des Dokumentarischen diskutieren, die sich, unter Zuhilfenahme der Arbeiten von Pooja Rangan (2017) und Tina Campt (2017), über die Herstellung einer *anderen* ‚Vernehmbarkeit‘ von Migration näher beschreiben lassen. Kritische Auseinandersetzungen können dort möglich werden, wo, so ließe sich mit Judith Butler und Athena Athanasiou (2013) zuspitzen, die „Verletzbarkeit“ von Migrant*innen vernehmbar wird, ohne sie zu entpolitisieren und ihrer Handlungsmacht zu „enteignen“ (ebd.: 129 u. 158f.). Wie verhalten sich jedoch *Sichtbarkeit* und *Vernehmbarkeit* zueinander?

— Charles Heller, Lorenzo Pezzani and Maurice Stierl beschreiben illegalisierte Migration im maritimen Grenzraum Europas unter den „conditions of (dis)appearance, (in)audibility, (in)visibility“ stehend (2017: 2), was bedeutet, dass den „klandestinen“ (ebd.) Versuchen der Grenzüberquerung auf der Seite der Grenzkontrolle das Unterfangen gegenübersteht, „to shed light on migration and in particular on acts of unauthorised border crossings in order to make the phenomenon of migration more knowable, predictable and governable“ (ebd.). Dieses Wechselspiel schreibt sich fort in der Illegalisierung von Migration, die sich mit Nanna Heidenreich als bildpolitische Inszenierung ihrer Sichtbarkeit verstehen lässt: „Die Unsichtbarkeit illegalisierter Migration wird nicht zuletzt über Visualisierungen als zu kontrollierende Bewegung (mit) hergestellt; die zahlreichen Bilder der Boote, Todesopfer und bildlich auf das nackte Leben reduzierten Überlebenden der Passage über das Mittelmeer und den Atlantik sind nicht die Ausnahme, sondern im Fotojournalismus, in Dokumentationen, in ‚Aufklärungs‘-Kampagnen und Filmen (in allen Formaten) ein präserter Topos, der diese sichtbare Unsichtbarkeit inszeniert“ (Heidenreich 2014: 18). Für kritische dokumentarische Ansätze stellt sich die Frage, wie sich in das skizzierte Feld der Sichtbarkeitsproduktion von Migration wahrnehmungspolitisch und zugleich verantwortungsvoll intervenieren lässt.

— Im Kontext von Protesten und Demonstrationen gegen neoliberale Dynamiken der Prekarisierung und antidemokratischen Formen der Regierung verweist Judith Butler in einem aktuellen Aufsatz auf die Schlüsselrolle gegenwärtiger Medien, in der Herausbildung neuer Formen solidarischer und politischer Öffentlichkeiten (Vgl. Butler 2016: 14). In Auseinandersetzung mit Hannah Arendts Theorie politischer Öffentlichkeit und ihrem Konzept des „Erscheinungsraumes“ räumt Butler heutigen – sich wie im Kontext des Arabischen Frühlings um Bilder portabler Handycameras oder durch soziale Netzwerke formierenden – medialen

Öffentlichkeiten den Status eines „infrastructural support“ (ebd.) ein, durch den sich plurale Aushandlungsprozesse eines „space of appearance“ (ebd.) performativ konstituieren können, „including not only those who can appear within the visual images of the public, but those who are, through coercion, fear, or necessity, living outside the reach of the visual frame“ (ebd.)

— In den politischen (Gegen)Öffentlichkeiten, um die es hier geht, wird Verletzbarkeit als Widerständigkeit mobilisiert (vgl. ebd.: 14f.) und die dabei entstehenden Protestformen lassen sich, Butler zuspitzend, als wahrnehmungspolitische Intervention in ausschließende oder normativierende visuelle Rahmungen von Existenzweisen und Subjektivitäten lesen (vgl. ebd.: 14f.). Der kritische Einsatz dokumentarischer Projekte ließe sich über vergleichbare Interventionen noch einmal näher bestimmen. Eine Strategie, die Möglichkeiten des Erscheinens von Migrant*innen und ihrer Vernehmbarkeit zu verschieben, zielt darauf, Verletzbarkeit jenseits von Viktimisierung in Stellung zu bringen.

— Bereits während des *Sommers der Migration* entstanden dokumentarische Projekte, die über kollaborative Ansätze ein von oder mit Migrant*innen gefilmtes Material integrieren, oder konzeptuell zum Ausgang nehmen. Kollaborative Ansätze und „partizipative Modi“ sind im Dokumentarfilm keineswegs neu (vgl. Nichols 2001: 115–124). Gerade der Ansatz, die Kamera unter Anleitung in filmischen Grundtechniken an Teilnehmer*innen zu übergeben, lässt sich von der visuellen Anthropologie in den 1950er Jahren bis zu politischen und aktivistischen Dokumentationsprojekten in den 1960er Jahren zurückverfolgen.⁵⁾ Kollaborative Ästhetiken umfassen heterogene Strategien, die wie in Jean Rouchs „ethno-fictions“ (Sjöberg 2008: 229–231) auch kulturelle Inszenierungen und Fabulationen enthalten können und durch Verfahren des „feedback“ (Rouch 2003: 44f.) oder der gemeinsamen Montage auf den Prozess des Filmens als Möglichkeit setzen, um relationale Formen der Artikulation von Subjektivität oder sozialer Organisation zu erzielen. Die Diskussion um die repräsentationspolitischen, ethischen und nicht zuletzt ästhetischen Implikationen und Fallstricke des kollaborativen Filmens lassen sich von den 1960er Jahren bis in die Gegenwart verfolgen und sind keineswegs abgeschlossen. So hat Faye Ginsburg kürzlich im Zusammenhang aktueller Dokumentationen die Schlüsselrolle einer „collaborative sensibility“ (Ginsburg 2018: 43) für das „project of decolonizing ethnographic documentary“ (ebd.) hervorgehoben.⁶⁾

5) In den kollaborativen und aktivistischen Film- und Videoprojekten der *Challenge for Change Initiative* des kanadischen *NFB (National Film Board of Canada)* tritt das Filmen in Beziehung mit der Förderung sozialer (Selbst)Organisations- und Kommunikationsprozesse in den Gemeinden Quebecs und Neufundlands, vgl. dazu Waugh/Baker/Winton (2010).

6) Ginsburg geht es hierbei um die Möglichkeiten einer „aesthetics of accountability“ (2018: 43), man kann hier von einer *Verantwortlichkeit* sprechen, die sich nicht nur in der Beziehung bspw. zwischen indigenen Filmemacher*innen und der Mitarbeit von Informant*innen und Anthropologinnen ausdrückt, sondern auch in der Sensibilität, mit der dokumentarisches *Material* in eine dokumentarische Erzählung integriert wird.

— Doch was bedeutet es, wenn kollaborative Strategien im Jahr 2015 im Kontext von Dokumentationen zu Flucht und Migration Anwendung finden? Können kollaborative Ansätze andere Bilder und Erfahrungen zum Ausdruck bringen, die eine Differenz gegenüber den hegemonialen Narrativen und Sichtbarkeitsproduktionen von Migration geltend machen? Anhand der Analyse der partizipativen Fernsehdokumentationen *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* (2016; R: James Bluemel u.a.) und des Dokumentarfilms *Les Sauteurs* (2016; R: Abou Bakar Sidibé, Moritz Siebert u. Estephan Wagner; C: Estephan Wagner) werde ich der Frage nachgehen, inwiefern hier neue Sensibilitäten für *andere* audiovisuelle Vernehmbarkeiten migrantischer Verletzbarkeit und Handlungsmacht entstehen. Hierbei wird es mir im Anschluss an Rangan, Butler und Camp (2017) darum gehen, die Differenzen von *Sichtbarkeit* und *Vernehmbarkeit*, *Voice* und *Audibility* sowie den dokumentarischen Gesten des *Stimmgebens* und *Gehörverleihens* kritisch zu diskutieren.

7) Zu einer kurzen Rekonstruktion der politischen Entwicklungen, die vor und während des *Sommers der Migration* zur Herausbildung neuer Korridore und Routen und zu einer Krise des Schengener Abkommens und des Dublin Systems führten, vgl. Kasperek (2017).

GIVING VOICE, GAINING ACCESS — Die von der BBC produzierte dreiteilige Fernsehdokumentation *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* wurde im Juli des Jahres 2016 unmittelbar nach dem britischen EU-Mitgliedschaftsreferendum auf dem Sender BBC 2 ausgestrahlt. Die Dokumentation begleitet insgesamt acht Protagonist*innen auf ihren Flucht- und Migrationswegen zu Zielen in Europa (Großbritannien, Deutschland, Finnland, Italien). Der dramaturgische Schwerpunkt der Dokumentation liegt darauf, die Reise seiner Protagonist*innen entlang jener Stationen der östlichen u. zentralen Mittelmeer- und Balkanroute, auf die sich im Zuge der ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ die mediale Aufmerksamkeit richtete, über audiovisuelle Selbstdokumentationen von Handykameras zu vermitteln.

— Die dokumentarische Erzählung von *Exodus* setzt inmitten der Ereignisse des Sommers 2015 ein, als vor allem Fluchtmigrant*innen aus Syrien, Afghanistan und Irak die EU-Außengrenze über das Ägäische Meer von der Türkei zu den griechischen Inseln zu überqueren versuchten, in Folge dessen das Dublin-System vorrübergehend ausgesetzt, Grenzen (z.B. von Mazedonien, Deutschland, Österreich) kurzfristig geschlossen bzw. geöffnet wurden und sich Transitkorridore herausbildeten.⁷⁾

— Die erste Episode von *Exodus* setzt mit den Geschichten von Protagonist*innen ein, die ihre Reise zu diesem Zeitpunkt bereits begonnen hatten und wie die elfjährige Isra'a und ihre Familie oder der aus Damaskus stammende Hassan zur Küstenstadt

Izmir gelangten, um nun die Weiterführung oder Finanzierung ihrer Reise zu organisieren. Im Verlauf der drei Episoden eröffnet die Dokumentation Perspektiven auf die Erfahrungen weiterer Migrant*innen, die ihre Reise noch vor sich haben. Sie begleitet dabei u.a. den Aufbruch einer Gruppe vier afghanischer Geschwister auf den Etappen von Kabul über Teheran nach Ankara sowie die gefährliche Route eines jungen Gambianers, der auf seinem Weg die nigrische Wüste passieren muss, um schließlich von Lybien über das Mittelmeer nach Italien gelangen zu können. Über die unterschiedlichen Herkunftsländer (Irak, Afghanistan, Syrien, Gambia) und Berufe der männlichen Migranten (Lehrer, Student, Gastronom, Geschäftsmann) wird in *Exodus* das Unterfangen einer auf kultureller Diversität und Transnationalität basierenden multiperspektivischen Erzählweise erkennbar. Hiermit eng verbunden ist der partizipative Ansatz des Fernsehformats. Neben den Aufnahmen des Kamerateams und den in einem abgedunkeltem Studio aufgezeichneten Interviews, sind es mithilfe von zuvor ausgehändigten Handykameras und Sim-Karten aufgezeichnete Videos der Protagonist*innen, über die multiple Erfahrungen und Erzählperspektiven in *Exodus* ermöglicht werden sollen.

— Die männliche Voice-Over Stimme der Intro-Sequenz führt diesen Ansatz als zentrales dokumentarisches Konzept von *Exodus* jeweils vor den Episoden ein: „In 2015 over one million people smuggled themselves into Europe. For a year we followed some of their extraordinary journeys across twenty-six countries. We filmed them as they left their families and homes behind across continents all the way to their final destinations. And they used camera phones to record places no one else could go. This is the story of the migrant crisis told by the people who risked everything for the dream of a better life in Europe.“ Der Voice-Over ist über eine Bildsequenz gelegt, die Aufnahmen aus den drei Episoden vorwegnimmt: Szenen, die an Medienbilder von der Balkanroute sowie Berichterstattung über den *march of hope* des Sommers 2015 (vgl. Hess/Karakayali 2016: 25f.) erinnern; Aufnahmen eines überfüllten Schlauchbootes, dessen Enge sich über die verrutschte Nahperspektive einer Handykamera vermittelt; wiederum andere Bilder zeigen Menschen zusammengequetscht in beengten Lastwagenhängern, gefolgt von Aufnahmen von zerstörten Häuserfronten aus dem Syrienkrieg. Die zum Teil niedrige Auflösung der Bilder rückt sie unmittelbar in die Ästhetik jener Handyvideos, die während des *Sommers der Migration* über soziale Medien zirkulierten und häufig auch Eingang in journalistische

Berichterstattung fanden. Bereits die Montage der Intro-Sequenz vermittelt den Ansatz, Praktiken der Selbstdokumentation von Migrant*innen in die multiperspektivische Erzählung von Exodus einzubetten. Hierdurch stellt sie implizit in Aussicht, durch ‚authentische‘ Darstellungen von Fluchterfahrungen die persönlichen Geschichten hinter den Medienbildern der ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ kennenzulernen: „And they used camera phones to record places no one else could go“.⁸⁾

— Im Verlauf der Dokumentation sind es die in ‚talking-head‘ Einstellungen gedrehten Interviews mit den Protagonist*innen, über die Informationen zu Biographien, Flucht- und Migrationsursachen oder Hoffnungen an die Zuschauer*innen vermittelt werden. Die Interviews, die zu einem nicht näher erläuterten Zeitpunkt aufgenommen wurden, fungieren als narrativ zugespitzte Zeugnisse der extremen Fluchterfahrungen. *Exodus* lässt hier den Versuch erkennen, über diese Vergegenwärtigungsversuche der Protagonist*innen und ihre z.T. äußerst emotionalen Schilderungen von sichtlich kaum verarbeiteten Erlebnissen eine dokumentarische Ästhetik der unmittelbaren Teilhabe an persönliche Fluchterfahrungen zu eröffnen. Ein Ansatz der in postkolonialen Perspektiven der Dokumentarfilmtheorie als Unterfangen des *giving voice to the voiceless* kritisch analysiert wurde. So ordnet Trinh Minh Ha die Vorstellung des *giving voice* durch Interviews und *talking heads* als Unterfangen der Authentifizierung des Anderen ein, „to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image“ (Minh Ha 1991: 67).

— In *Exodus* ist es das übergeordnete Unterfangen, Flucht und Migration zu „humanisieren“⁹⁾, von dem aus die Interviews und Amateurvideos der Protagonist*innen dazu dienen, ihre Erfahrungen als persönliche und ‚echte‘ Geschichten von Flucht zu authentifizieren. Der Filmwissenschaftler Bruce Bennett beschreibt dies folgendermaßen: „Exodus shares with the films of Robert Flaherty the compassionate intention of humanizing its subjects, challenging the terrorizing stereotype of the refugee as dangerous criminal, religious extremist or workshy opportunist looking for handouts. Its strategy is to present these characters in their particularity and ordinariness, allowing them, to a degree, to tell their own stories.“ (Bennett 2018: 20).

— Die von Bennett beschriebene Strategie verharret in einer humanisierenden Logik, die in der dokumentarischen Darstellung soziale, geschlechtliche, kulturelle und religiöse Differenz zugunsten einer verbindenden und zugleich universalisierenden

8) Dieser unmittelbare Zugriff auf die Erfahrungen und *Stimmen* von Migrant*innen durch den partizipativen Ansatz ist eine zentrale Selbstbeschreibung des Projekts, die über das Intro hinaus auch über die Internetseite der BBC 2 unter der Botschaft „The stories behind the journeys“ kommuniziert wird: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07ky6ft> (29.02.2019). Den kurzen Zusammenstellungen biographischer Informationen der Protagonist*innen werden jeweils kurze, signifikante Clips beigelegt. Informationen über den aktuellen Status oder weiterführende Erläuterungen über die Kriterien der Auswahl der Teilnehmer*innen werden indes weder über die Internetseite noch innerhalb der Dokumentation kommuniziert.

9) In einem Interview erläutert der Regisseur James Bluemel dies wie folgt: „The documentary is from each refugee's point of view, so it humanises an issue that has been all about scale and numbers until now“ (Bluemel/Harrison 2016).

Konstruktion *bedrohten Lebens* überschreibt. In vergleichbaren dokumentarischen Konstruktionen, in denen über die Weitergabe der Kamera ebenfalls eine Ermächtigung minoritärer nicht-westlicher ‚Stimmen‘ produziert wird, hat Pooja Rangan die ideologische Funktion des *giving voice to the voiceless* in den von ihr als „Immediations“ beschriebenen „humanitarian genres of participatory documentary“ untersucht und fragt: „How does the perception of humanity at risk drive the production of humanist aesthetic forms that produce the ‘humanity’ that they claim to document?“ (Rangan 2017a: 2). Rangan beschreibt hier die Mechanismen eines normativierenden Diskurses, der in dem Anspruch der Darstellung humanitärer ‚Krisen‘ zugleich die Grenzen und Bedingungen einer imaginierten ‚humanitären Gemeinschaft‘ markiert und naturalisiert (Vgl. ebd: 7f.) Anhand von dokumentarischen und narrativen Tropen humanitärer Notlagen weist Rangan nach, wie die Geste, die Kamera an die *Anderen* zu übergeben, eine Alterität als Gegenüber des Humanen konstruiert und ausschließt „but do so through the seemingly inclusive gesture of inviting them to perform their humanity“ (ebd: 6).

— In *Exodus* wird in vergleichbaren Operationen die Verletzbarkeit von Migrant*innen an den humanitären Ausnahmezustand gebunden. Das Ermächtigungsnarrativ des *Giving Voice* lässt sich in *Exodus* gerade in dem Unterfangen wiederfinden, die ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘ über den Zugang zu extremen und lebensbedrohlichen Situationen („record places no-one else can go“) durch Amateuraufnahmen zu erlangen. Die dokumentarische Erzählung von Flucht, die *Exodus* durch das *footage* der Protagonist*innen, die Aufnahmen des Produktionsteams und durch Interviews verdichtet, konzentriert sich vor allem auf Handlungen der Durchführung – oder Planung – von Grenzübertritten. Gerade die Auswahl des Handymaterials zeigt immer wieder lebensbedrohliche Situationen, in die sich die Protagonist*innen filmend begeben, um Grenzen in Schlauchbooten, in Tanklastern oder Laderäumen vermeintlich *undokumentiert* zu überqueren. Die Multiperspektivität, die sich eingangs der Fernsehdokumentation noch durch die verschiedenen nationalen und geographischen Herkünfte der Protagonist*innen andeutet, wird dabei in einer übergeordneten Dramaturgie eingeschränkt.

— Die einzelnen Migrationsgeschichten erscheinen in diesem narrativen und dramaturgischen Rahmen ausschließlich als Fallbeispiele von Überlebenden eines humanitären Ausnahmezustandes. *Exodus* lässt die kulturellen, religiösen und sozialen Unterschiede der einzelnen Migrationsgeschichten in den Hinter-

grund einer von allen geteilten Krisenerfahrung zurücktreten. In dieser narrativen Konstruktion von Migration und Flucht bleibt kein Spielraum für die Wahrnehmung migrantischer *Agency*. Im Rückgriff auf Butler und Athanasiou ließe sich diese Erzählung als eine enteignende „humanitäre Viktimisierung“ (Athanasiou/Butler 2013: 26) beschreiben, in der die Verwundbarkeit von Migrant*innen nur innerhalb der Grenzen eines Opferdiskurses – und damit ohne die Möglichkeit politischer Auseinandersetzungen – verhandelbar wird (Vgl. ebd.: 158f.).

— *Exodus* schreibt so an einem Narrativ mit, das sich während des *Sommers der Migration* etablierte: „Denn im Kontext einer europäisch-westlichen Rechtfertigungsordnung sind nur jene Migrationen als legitim darstellbar, in denen Migrant_innen gleichsam gegen ihren Willen migrieren“ (Hess/Karakayali 2016: 29).¹⁰⁾ In der dokumentarischen Ästhetik von *Exodus* überkreuzt sich die Legitimationsfunktion dieses Viktimisierungsnarrativs mit der audiovisuelle Evidenz und Authentizität stiftenden Funktion der eingebetteten Handyvideos. Die Amateuraufnahmen eröffnen einen fragwürdigen ‚Zugang‘¹¹⁾ zu Szenen aus Kriegsgebieten und Grenzüberquerungen europäischer Außen- und Binnengrenzen. Der Ansatz ‚Shot by refugees‘ in *Exodus* dient schließlich weniger dazu, heterogene Flucht- und Migrationsgeschichten zu erzählen, als vielmehr Zuschauer*innen audiovisuelles Material vorzuführen, zu dem das Produktionsteam unterer konventionellen Produktionsbedingungen keinen direkten Zugang besäße. Die Dokumentationen der Geschichten von Hassan, einem Englischlehrer aus Damaskus und Ahmad, einem Englischstudenten aus Aleppo, verdeutlichen, warum diese dokumentarische Ästhetik in *Exodus* zugleich in eine problematische Produktion von Sichtbarkeit verwickelt ist. Beide Männer erläutern und filmen ihre Versuche, Ländergrenzen auf dem Weg nach Großbritannien zu überwinden. Beide geraten dabei wiederholt in Situationen, in denen sie sich lebensbedrohlichen Situationen aussetzen oder kriminalisierte Handlungen ausführen müssen.

— Eine Sequenz zeigt Hassan, wie er in einem überfüllten Kleinlaster die ungarisch-österreichische Grenze überquert. Die unruhige Führung der Handycamera zeugt von den hektischen Bedingungen, unter denen die Aufnahmen entstanden sind. Ein Eindruck, der über das kurze Schnittintervall der Sequenz und einen ebenfalls in der Postproduktion hinzugefügten elektronischen Klang zusätzlich verdichtet wird. Hassan hält in dieser Szene, kurz bevor der Transporter die Grenze passiert, ein weiteres Telefondisplay vor die Kamera, auf der eine GPS-Karte die vollzogene

10) Wenn dieser Beitrag im Kontext von Migrationsregimen Viktimisierungsnarrative kritisch befragt, geht es nicht darum, die prekären Bedingungen und existenziellen Gefahren, denen Fluchtmigrant*innen ausgesetzt sind, zu leugnen, sondern um die Frage, wie migrantische Handlungsmacht unsichtbar gemacht (vgl. Karakayali 2008: 249) und zugleich Verletzbarkeit in der Konstruktion des Opfers entpolitisiert wird (Vgl. Athanasiou/Butler 2013: 158f.).

11) Der Regisseur wie auch das Produktionsteam greifen in Interviews auf das Bild des ‚direkten Zugangs‘ (‚access‘ im englischen Orig.) zurück (vgl. Bluemel/Boghani 2016 oder Gillespie/Squires 2016).

Grenzüberquerung sichtbar werden lässt. Es sind Szenen wie diese, die *Exodus* in die Nähe eines „Spectacle of migrant illegality“ rücken, wie es von Nicholas De Genova beschrieben wurde (Vgl. De Genova 2013). Denn mit dem ‚Spektakel‘ des Grenzübertritts wird in derartigen Szenen die Illegalität von Migration visuell konstruiert und letztlich naturalisiert. Die Handyaufnahmen der Protagonist*innen in *Exodus* rahmen diese Illegalität außerdem durch die Dokumentation von Gesprächen und Kontakten mit Schmugglern, deren Willkür – neben den Gefahren vermeintlich natürlicher Grenzen wie der Sahara-Wüste oder des Ägäischen Meeres – als primäre Gefahrenfaktoren dargestellt werden. Zu der Sichtbarkeitsproduktion von Illegalität gehört in *Exodus* auch, dass die Protagonisten Vorgänge filmen, in denen sie sich gefälschte Visa oder Pässe besorgen. Was die Dokumentation dabei jedoch nicht thematisiert, sind jene juristischen und politischen Prozesse, die die Illegalisierung und Kriminalisierung von Migration überhaupt erst hervorbringen. In *Exodus* treten die Kontroll- und Steuerungsmechanismen europäischer Grenzregime (wie das Dublin-System) hinter die Darstellung humanitärer Ausnahmezustände und die Gefahren durch vermeintlich natürliche Grenzen und Schmuggler zurück. Die dokumentarische Erzählung und Ästhetik von *Exodus* verfängt sich in der Darstellungslogik eines Narrativs der Viktimisierung und Illegalisierung von Migrant*innen.

— Die Strategie, die Kamera abzugeben ist in dieses Narrativ zentral eingebettet und lässt wenige Szenen zu, in denen das Material der Protagonist*innen nicht Ausdruck der Dramaturgie eines humanitären Ausnahmezustands ist. In der Art wie der kollaborative Ansatz in *Exodus* eingesetzt wird, reproduziert *Exodus* ein biopolitisches Raster von Migration. Denn wenn Hassan seinen Versuch, über das Ägäische Meer von Izmir nach Griechenland zu gelangen, filmt und dabei das havarierende Schlauchboot vom ersten Eindringen des Wassers, des Ansetzens angsterfüllter Schreie, bis zu dem Zeitpunkt dokumentiert, an dem er die weiterhin filmende Kamera in andere Hände übergeben muss, während er sich vom Wasser aus an den Bootsseiten festklammert, dann gilt es zu fragen, welches Leben für Aufnahmen wie diese riskiert wird und welches nicht? In dramatischen Szenen wie diesen überlagert sich das biopolitische Kalkül des Sterbenlassens von Migrant*innen mit Viktimisierungs- und Illegalisierungsdiskursen in einer zynischen, auf Teilhabe- und Echtheitseffekte setzenden dokumentarischen Ästhetik der „Immediation“¹²⁾.

12) Auch Rangan konstatiert in ihrer Kritik der Vorstellung des ‚Giving Voice‘ in partizipativen Dokumentationen ein Ineinandergreifen von dokumentarischer Unmittelbarkeit und biopolitischer Logik. Ihre Analyse legt dabei präzise frei, wie sich rassistische Grenzziehungen über Inklusion und Partizipation fortschreiben oder etablieren (vgl. hierzu Rangan 2017a: 61–101).

— Problematisch ist nicht allein der Umstand des Zeigens dieser und anderer Szenen, in denen sich Migrant*innen in äußerst riskanten Situationen filmen, sondern der Mangel an einer dokumentarischen Ethik, die über die Montage – oder eine andere Ebene – markiert, reflektiert bzw. kurzum Verantwortung dafür übernimmt, dass sie in die Produktion dieser Aufnahmen verstrickt ist. Während *Exodus* auf der einen Seite partizipative und interventionistische Ansätze verfolgt, die aus Traditionen rühren, in denen dokumentarische Formen die Beziehung zwischen Filmmacher*innen zu ihren Teilnehmer*innen reflektieren, zieht sich die BBC-Produktion bei der Einbettung des *footage* gleichzeitig in den Modus eines „naive[n] repräsentative[n] Dokumentarismus“ ethisch zurück (Muhle 2014: 92), der lediglich „the fact that they were already filming themselves“ (Gillespie/Squires 2016) für sich zu nutzen weiß.

— Die von Hassan dokumentierte Szene des havarierenden Bootes erinnert indes an die sich seit einigen Jahren über YouTube und anderen online Plattformen verbreitenden Harraga-Videos¹³⁾, auf denen zumeist junge Migrant*innen ihre gefährlichen Transitversuche über das Mittelmeer mithilfe ihrer Handykamera festhalten. Harraga-Videos und die sie begleitenden medialen Praktiken der Zirkulation und Montage erschöpfen sich nicht im Akt der Selbstdokumentation, sondern lassen sich mit Brigitta Kuster auch als Strategien verstehen, sich der eigenen Erfassung und ‚Dokumentierbarkeit‘ durch Migrationsregime zu entziehen: „In der Produktion und Modifikation der filmischen Gefüge der Harraga bricht sich das Insistieren auf einem Selbstbestimmungsrecht, welches zugleich mit der narratologisch rekonstruierbaren Kohärenz von Story (Herkunft, Biografie, Reisegeschichte), Person (Identität) sowie deren Dokumentierbarkeit (Ausweispapiere, Identifikation) gebrochen hat, Bahn“ (Kuster 2018: 15).

— Auch in der von Hassan dokumentierten Überfahrt ist dieses Beharren auf ein ‚Selbstbestimmungsrecht‘ zweifelsohne angelegt. In dem Hochladen von Harraga-Videos artikuliert sich, das „right to mobility“, dies lässt Maja Figges Lesart der Harraga als politische Praxis deutlich werden, die darin bestehe, „that they constitute a public – probably local and also limited in terms of views or clicks – bringing the moving and speaking or singing bodies in the boats to appearance (Figge 2017: 30). Wenn nun Dokumentarfilme anstelle von YouTube oder anderen online Plattformen zum Milieu von Dokumenten wie Hassans Harraga-Video werden, dann bedeutet dies keineswegs – gerade vor dem Hintergrund der beschriebenen Verwobenheit und Durchlässigkeit gegen-

13) Harraga-Videos sind kurze Handyvideos, die von meist jungen Migrant*innen bei ihren gefährlichen Überfahrten des Atlantik erstellt werden. Harraga lässt sich aus dem Arabischen mit „diejenigen, die verbrennen“ übersetzen. Zu einer Lesart der Harraga-Videos als eine „Politik der Unwahrnehmbarkeit“ vgl. das Kapitel *Traversées* aus Kuster (2018: 183–304).

wärtiger politischer Ökologien dokumentarischer Praktiken –, dass sich nicht auch in dieser Teilöffentlichkeit ein Recht auf Migration artikulieren kann.

— Wenn in *Exodus* das knapp vierminütige Video von Hassans Überfahrtsversuch mit zusätzlichen Schnitten und Schwarzbildern verdichtet oder die Tonspur um die Dramatik der Ereignisse hervorhebende extra-diegetische Klänge ergänzt wird, dann lässt diese Dramatisierung des Videomaterials keine den Blick herausfordernden politischen und widerständigen Praktiken mehr erkennen. Der Anspruch auf ein „Selbstbestimmungsrecht“, wie es sich noch in den Harraga-Videos (Vgl. Kuster 2018: 15) der *Sans-Papiers* artikuliert, wird in *Exodus* in einer dokumentarischen Ästhetik humanitärer Krisen enteignet und wie jede weitere Form migrantischer Handlungsmacht *unvernehmbar* gemacht.

VON DER SICHTBARKEIT ZUR VERNEHMBARKEIT VON MIGRATION

— Auch der Film *Les Sauteurs – Those Who Jump* (2016; R: Moritz Siebert, Estephan Wagner, Abou Bakar Sidibé) entstand aus einer kollaborativen Zusammenarbeit. Die dokumentarische Anordnung zielt hier jedoch nicht auf eine aus vielen persönlichen Geschichten komponierte Gesamtschau der ‚Flüchtlingskrise‘, sondern konzentriert sich auf einen jener Orte und Transitpunkte, an dem die Reise nach Europa für viele Migrant*innen aus den Subsahararegionen vorerst zum Erliegen gerät. Geschützt in den Wäldern des Berg Gourougou befindet sich ein provisorisches Camp, das von Migrant*innen bewohnt wird, die die gefährliche Überquerung des sechs Meter hohen Grenzzauns zwischen Marokko und der spanischen Exklave Melilla wagen. Alarmsysteme, Infrarotkameras, Sicherungsgräben, NATO-Draht ebenso wie illegale Push-Back Aktionen der spanischen Guardia Civil machen aus dem *Sprung* über den Zaun einen risikoreichen und langwierigen Prozess des Ausharrens und der gemeinschaftlichen Planung. Der Malier Abou Bakar Sidibé befindet sich bereits seit 14 Monaten auf dem Berg, als ihn die beiden deutschen Regisseure Moritz Siebert und Estephan Wagner mit der Bitte konfrontieren, die Lebensumstände in der Grenzregion mit einer Kamera zu dokumentieren.¹⁴⁾

— Sidibé wird mit der Kamera auch das dokumentarische Mandat übergeben. Dass Siebert und Wagner damit aber nicht zugleich die Verantwortung für das von dem Malier gefilmte Material abgeben, wird u.a. an der Prämisse des Projektes deutlich, nicht in unmittelbarer Nähe des Zaunes und seiner Gefahrenquellen zu filmen. *Les Sauteurs* ist kein persönlicher

14) Neben einer Kamera und der finanziellen Honorierung seiner Arbeit erhielt der Malier eine Kurzanweisung in die Grundlagen des Filmens (vgl. Siebert/Wagner 2016a).

Erfahrungsbericht und verfällt trotz der Thematisierung der spezifischen Gewaltförmigkeit, die von dem hochgerüsteten Grenzsysteem ausgeht, nicht in die Darstellungsästhetik einer „bare humanity“ (Rangan 2017a: 11). Sidibés Kamera untersucht vielmehr die provisorischen sozialen und kulturellen Organisationsformen in dem Camp, die ihrerseits auf die prekären Lebensbedingungen an diesem Ort reagieren. Sidibés Einstellungen lassen dabei an dem Prozess teilhaben, die filmästhetischen Ausdrucks- und Übersetzungsformen zu erproben, um sich den komplexen sozialen und kulturellen Zusammenhängen auf dem Gourougou und damit einem Zusammenleben im Wartezustand mitsamt seinen alltäglichen Verrichtungen anzunähern. Durch die Kameraarbeit erprobt Sidibé einen dokumentarischen Modus, der sich, wie ich an anderer Stelle untersucht habe, treffender als eine *Kamerapoetik des Zusammenlebens*¹⁵⁾ denn als Realismus beschreiben lässt.

— In *Les Sauteurs* wird wiederholt der Blick vom Gourougou auf Melilla als sehnsuchtsvoller *Nicht-Ort* einer ungewissen Reise nach Europa inszeniert. Eine Aufnahme, die das Panorama des Flughafen auf der europäischen Seite des Zaunes im nächtlichen Spiel der Lichter einfängt, ist mit einem Voice-Over Sidibés montiert, in der der Malier rückblickend den Stellenwert des Films für die Bewohnbarkeit seiner Umgebung reflektiert: „Sieht man die Welt durch eine Kamera, nimmt man die Umgebung anders wahr. Ich begann Gefallen zu finden an der Erzeugung von Bildern. Nach und nach entdeckte ich die Schönheit darin. Sie haben einen Sinn für mich. Ich begann, mich mit Bildern auszudrücken. Ich spüre, dass ich existiere, weil ich filme – Je sens que j’existe, car je filme“.

— Aus Sidibés Einstellungen und den kurzen eingesprochenen Texten, mithin aus den Verzweigungen von Stimme und Bild, entsteht eine Reflexionsebene der komplexen Erfahrungsdimension des Alltags am Gourougou. Die teils poetischen Texte Sidibés eröffnen bedeutungsvolle Bezüge, lassen darin aber auch die affektiven Intensitäten im audiovisuellen Material und damit im dokumentierten Alltag auf dem Gourougou überhaupt erst vernehmbar werden. Eine Einstellung filmt beispielsweise einige Männer dabei, wie sie bei Tageslicht erschöpft oder schlafend auf ihren Decken nebeneinander liegen. Währenddessen erzählt Sidibés Stimme von den intensiven, die *Sauteurs* (dt. die Springer) – wie sich die Bewohner des Camps mit Blick auf den Sprung über den Grenzzaun bezeichnen – heimsuchenden Träumen, in die sich die Gewalterfahrung des Zaunes, aber auch die Angst zu scheitern, einschreibt. Vorsichtig nähert

15) Zum Verhältnis von *Les Sauteurs* „Poetik des Zusammenlebens“ und der maßgeblichen Funktion der Montage als Verhandlungsort der Kollaboration vgl. Seibel (2019).

sich *Les Sauteurs* in Szenen wie dieser den affektiven und traumatisierenden Dimensionen der Migration an und verleiht auch jenen Erfahrungen Gehör, die sich zum Zeitpunkt der Entstehung des Films nicht in eine kohärente Erzählung überführen lassen.

— Der kollaborative Ansatz von *Les Sauteurs* lässt sich meines Erachtens genauer über derartige Momente der dokumentarästhetischen Übersetzung und Subjektivierung von Migration – die über die persönliche Erfahrung hinausgeht – beschreiben und zugleich von einer authentifizierenden Geste eines *Giving Voice* abgrenzen. Rangan hat unlängst vorgeschlagen, die Aufmerksamkeit vom Konzept des *Giving Voice*, als politisch-ethischer Metapher des Dokumentarfilms, zu den Formen dokumentarischer „audibility“, also den medialen Voraussetzungen von Vernehmbarkeit zu verschieben (2017b: 282). In Dokumentarfilmdiskursen überlagert sich im Konzept der Stimme eine politische Metaphorik mit der Vorstellung von Referentialität und unmittelbarer Beteiligung. Die von Rangan vorgeschlagene Perspektivierung über die „form of audibility“ (ebd.) erlaubt es hingegen, u.a. die ästhetischen und medialen Voraussetzungen des Sprechens und des Zuhörens im Dokumentarischen zu fokussieren.

— In *Les Sauteurs* authentifiziert Sidibés Stimme nicht die Bilder, sondern eröffnet eine weitere Möglichkeit, den Migrant*innen zuzuhören. Aus der ästhetischen Konfiguration von Bild und Stimme, Kamera und Montage gewinnt der von Sidibé eingefangene Alltag eine Vernehmbarkeit, die über seine bloße Sichtbarkeit hinausreicht. Als „listening to images“ bezeichnet Tina Campt eine Methodik der Annäherung an „practices of refusal“ in Photographien der schwarzen Diaspora (Camp 2017: 32). *Listening* stellt für Camp eine notwendige Erweiterung der sensorischen Betrachtung und Analyse von Bildern dar. Die Formen der Verweigerung hingegen, die Camp untersucht, mobilisieren sich auf der Ebene der „affective registers“ des Alltags (ebd.: 5). *Listening* bezeichnet hier ein sich Einlassen auf Praktiken des *stillen* Beharrens auf eine Zukunft, aber auch Akte des sich Entziehens, die sich in der „lower range of quotidian audibility“ der Bilder afrikanischer Diaspora artikulieren (ebd. 4). Es sind nicht die „acts of resistance“ politischer Bewegungen, sondern jene „everyday imaging practices of black communities“ (ebd.: 17f.), die Camp interessiert, gerade weil sich in ihnen Träume, Aspirationen und Hoffnungen als Weigerungen aufzugeben, ausdrücken.

— Den Abläufen und Routinen alltäglicher Praktiken und den das Überleben sichernden provisorischen Infrastrukturen

und solidarischen Organisationsformen im Camp, die das Interesse von Sidibés Kamera auf sich ziehen, eignet eben diese politische Dimension der Weigerung. Die Dokumentation von Tätigkeiten, wie der Beschaffung von Trinkwasser, dem Handel mit Lebensmitteln oder die Versorgung von am Zaun erlittener Wunden, zeigt wie eng Zusammenleben und Überleben unter den prekären Bedingungen in der Grenzregion zusammengehören. Die Widerständigkeit dieser Alltagspraktiken wird in einer Szene deutlich, in der die marokkanische Polizei das Camp räumt, seine Bewohner verjagt und sowohl Zelte, Decken und zurückgelassene Nahrung zerstört oder verbrennt. Die Aufnahmen von Sidibé lassen den Alltag auf dem Gourougou, zu dem ebenfalls die Vorbereitungen auf die gemeinsamen und immer wieder tödlich endenden Sprünge über den Zaun gehören, als ein Ensemble von Strategien und Praktiken wahrnehmbar werden, das sich aus der beharrlichen Weigerung, die rassistische Logik des Zauns zu akzeptieren, mobilisiert.

ALLTAG UND POLITISCHE SUBJEKTIVITÄT — In *Les Sauteurs* zeichnet die Kamera den Alltag nicht nur auf, vielmehr wird ihre Anwesenheit zu einem Aushandlungsort kultureller (Re) Inszenierungen von Gemeinschaftlichkeit und auch geteilter Aspirationen und Hoffnungen. So scheint beispielsweise ein Fußballderby, an dem mehrere Nationen der Subsahara-Regionen teilnehmen, für den Blick der Kamera und ein späteres Publikum ausgerichtet zu sein. Auch ein Zusammentreffen von Sidibés Freunden aus dem Camp auf der Anhöhe des Grenzberges, von der sie, begleitet von dem über die knarrenden Boxen eines Handys eingespielten Songs *I will always love you*, hinab auf Melilla und den Horizont des Mittelmeers schauen, scheint eine weitere gemeinsame Inszenierung sowie notwendige Aufrechterhaltung eines Hoffnungsbildes zu sein, das sich für und mithilfe des Kamerablicks zusammensetzt. In letzterer Szene übersetzt sich jene affektive Struktur zwischen Aspiration und Hoffnungslosigkeit, über die der Alltag auf dem Gourougou wesentlich strukturiert zu sein scheint.

— Dem Ansatz von *Les Sauteurs* gelingt es, den beharrlich dem Zustand des Wartens abgetrotzten Weigerungen Gehör zu verleihen. Es ist daher auch kein Zufall, dass der Alltag mit seinen undramatisch scheinenden und dennoch handlungsmächtigen Formen der Weigerungen, das eigene Recht auf Mobilität einschränken zu lassen, in den Konstruktionen humanitärer Krisen und Ausnahmezuständen nicht auftaucht. Mit Rangan

sowie Butler und Athanasiou ließe sich argumentieren, dass in humanitären Viktimisierungsnarrativen Subjekte auf ihre Ausgesetztheit reduziert werden und ihnen in dokumentarischen Darstellungen lediglich aus dieser festgeschriebenen Position heraus eine Stimme zuteil wird.

— Die kollaborative Form von *Les Sauteurs* artikuliert indes eine Form der Widerständigkeit von Migration, die sich, mit Butler gedacht, nicht trotz, sondern über Verletzbarkeit mobilisiert (2016). Die in *Les Sauteurs* thematisierte Verletzbarkeit von jungen afrikanischen Männern, die eine bessere Zukunft in Europa suchen, ist eine, die in der hegemonialen Viktimisierung von Migrant*innen kaum Gehör findet, dafür in Meldungen von ‚Flüchtlingsanstürmen‘ und ‚Flüchtlingswellen‘ auf europäische Außengrenzen diskursiv und wahrnehmungspolitisch umgeschrieben wird. Bis vor kurzem gab es wenige journalistische oder dokumentarische Auseinandersetzungen mit der Situationen von Migrant*innen in Melilla. Parallel zu Bedrohungen beschwörenden Meldungen wie ‚Ansturm auf Melilla‘ zirkulieren über Youtube Aufnahmen von Video- und Infrarotaufnahmen von Überwachungskameras der *Guardia Civil*, die die Versuche der *Springer* dokumentieren. In *Les Sauteurs* wird dieses offiziell freigegebene tonlose schwarz-weiß Material einmontiert und markiert einen Kontrapunkt zu den Aufnahmen Sidibés. Gerade das visuelle Raster der Infrarotkameras lässt lediglich einen Strom von Körpern und Punkten erkennen, die sich auf den Grenzzaun zu bewegen. In diesen „maschinell erzeugten Bildern“, so beschreiben es Siebert und Wagner, „spiegelt sich die inhärente Gewalt der Architektur des Grenzzaunes wider“ (Siebert/Wagner 2016b: 44). Auch diese Bilder gehören jener dokumentarischen Produktion von Sichtbarkeit an, die in der Bild- und Wahrnehmungspolitik von Migration kaum eine Erwiderung nach sich ziehen. Einige dieser Aufnahmen lassen in dem undeutlichen Schwarz-Weiß eine Anzahl von Männern dabei erkennen, wie sie sich bei ihrem Versuch der Überquerung der Gewalt des Zaunes ausliefern. Es wäre zu kurz gegriffen, so meine abschließende Überlegung, die Wirkung dieser automatisierten Kontrollbilder in *Les Sauteurs* lediglich über den Kontrast zu den subjektiven Aufnahmen von Sidibés Kamera wahrzunehmen. Vielmehr eröffnet die Rekontextualisierung in den Zusammenhang der von Sidibé dokumentierten Alltagspraktiken eine Relationalität, die diese stummen Überwachungsaufnahmen zu Dokumenten einer *unüberhörbaren* politischen Subjektivität und Agency werden lässt. Über den Kontext des ethnografischen Films hinaus könnten kollaborative Dokumentationen, so lässt

sich hoffen, zukünftig die Möglichkeit bieten, Verletzbarkeit nicht festzuschreiben, sondern durch ästhetische und ethisch-politische Formen zu mobilisieren.

// Literatur

- Athanasidou, Athena / Butler, Judith (2014): Die Macht der Enteigneten: Das Performative im Politischen (Aus dem Amerikanischen v. Thomas Atzert). Zürich/Berlin, diaphanes
- Bennett, Bruce (2018): Becoming refugees: Exodus and contemporary mediations of the refugee crisis, *Transnational Cinemas* 9, 1, S. 13–30
- Butler, Judith (2016): Rethinking vulnerability and resistance. In: Dies. / Gambetti, Zeynep / Sabsay, Leticia: *Vulnerability in resistance*. London/Durham, Duke Univ. Pres, S. 12–27
- Bluemel, James/Boghani, Priyanka (2016): Finding the Human Stories in Europe's Refugee Crisis. *Frontline*: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/finding-the-human-stories-in-europes-refugee-crisis/> (29.02.2019)
- Bluemel, James / Harrison, Ellie (2016): How Exodus: our Journey to Europe was filmed – and why it might have prevented Brexit. *Radio Times*. <https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-07-13/how-exodus-our-journey-to-europe-was-filmed-and-why-it-might-have-prevented-brexit/> (29.02.2019)
- Broeders, Dennis (2011): A European 'Border' Surveillance System under Construction. In: Dijkstra, Huub / Meijer, Albert (Hg.), *Migration and the New Technological Borders of Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, S. 40–67.
- Camp, Tina M. (2017): *Listening to images*. Durham/London, Duke University Press
- De Genova, Nicholas (2013): Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, 7, S. 1180–1198
- Figge, Maja (2017): 'Actions of the Eyes of the Fleeing'? Reflections on the In/Visibility of Harraga Videos. In: *Cinema & Cie*, 28, S. 21–30
- Gillespie, Marie / Squires, Daisy (2016): The making of 'Exodus: Our Journey to Europe' – Interviews with Keo Films (transcript). The Open University: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/people-politics-law/politics-policy-people/the-making-exodus-our-journey-europe-interviews-keo-films> (29.02.2019)
- Ginsburg, Faye (2018): Decolonizing Documentary On-Screen and Off: Sensory Ethnography and the Aesthetics of Accountability. In: *Film Quarterly*, 72, 1, S. 39–49
- Heidenreich, Nanna (2014): *V/Erkennungsdienste, das Kino und die Perspektive der Migration*. Bielefeld, transcript
- Heller, Charles / Pezzani, Lorenzo / Stierl, Maurice (2017): Disobedient sensing and border struggles at the maritime frontier of Europe. *Spheres: Journal for Digital Cultures*, 4. <http://spheres-journal.org/disobedient-sensing-and-border-struggles-at-the-maritime-frontier-of-europe/> (29.02.2019)
- Hess, Sabine / Karakayali, Serhat (2016): *Fluchtlinien der Migration. Grenzen als soziale Verhältnisse*. In: Dies. u.a. (Hg.), *Der lange Sommer der Migration: Grenzregime III*. Berlin, Assoziation A, S. 25–37
- Karakayali, Serhat (2008): *Gespenster der Migration: Zur Genealogie illegaler Einwanderung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Bielefeld, transcript
- Kuster, Brigitta (2007): *Die Grenze Filmen*. In: *Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe* (Hg.), *Turbulente Ränder Neue Perspektiven auf Migration an den Grenzen Europas*. Bielefeld, transcript, S. 187–202
- Kuster, Brigitta/Tsianos, Vassilis (2013): Erase them! Eurodac and Digital Deportability. In: *Transversal/EIPCP multilingual webjournal*, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0313/kuster-tsianos/enKuster> (25.03.2019)
- Kuster, Brigitta (2018): *Grenze Filmen. Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse audiovisueller Produktionen an den Grenzen Europas*. Bielefeld, transcript
- Kühnemund, Jan (2018): *Topographies of 'Borderland Schengen'. Documental Images of Undocumented Migration in European Borderlands*. Bielefeld, transcript
- Nash, Kate / Hight, Craig / Summerhayes, Catherine (2014): Introduction. In: Dies.: *New documentary ecologies: Emerging platforms, practices and discourses*. Basingstoke, Springer, 2014, 1–7
- Karakayali, Serhat / Tsianos, Vassilis (2007): *Movements that Matter. Eine Einleitung*. In: *Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe* (Hg.), *Turbulente Ränder. Neue Perspektiven auf Migration an den Grenzen Europas*. Bielefeld, Transcript, S. 7–22
- Kasperek, Bernd (2017): Routen, Korridore und Räume der Ausnahme. In: Hess, Sabine u.a. (Hg.), *Der lange Sommer der Migration: Grenzregime III*. Berlin, Assoziation A, S. 38–51
- Muhle, Maria (2014): Omer Fast: 5,000 Feet is the Best'. *Reenactment zwischen dokumentarischem und ästhetischem Regime*. In: *ZFM (Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft)* 11, 2, S. 91–101
- Nichols, Bill (2001): *Introduction to documentary*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press
- Rangan, Pooja (2017a): *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*. Durham/London, Duke University Press

Rangan, Pooja (2017b): Audibilities: Voice and Listening in the Penumbra of Documentary – An Introduction. In: *Discourse* 39, 3 (2017), S. 279–291

Bennett, Bruce (2018): Becoming refugees: Exodus and contemporary mediations of the refugee crisis. In: *Transnational Cinemas*, 9, 1, S. 13–30

Rouch, Jean (2003): The Camera and Man. In: Ders. (Hg.), *Ciné-Ethnography* (Übersetzung in engl. Steven Feld), Minneapolis/London, University of Minnesota Press, S. 29–46

Seibel, Sven (2019): Die Kamera übergeben. Montage und kollaboratives Filmemachen in les sauteurs. In: Doll, Martin (Hg.), *Cutting Edge! Aktuelle Positionen der Filmmontage*. Berlin, Bertz+Fischer, S. 151–177

Siebert, Moritz / Wagner, Estephan (2016a): Radikaler Perspektivwechsel (Statement der Regisseure aus dem begleitenden Pressematerial des Berlinale Forums. https://www.arsenalberlin.de/fileadmin/user_upload/forum/pdf2016/forum_deutsch/D_Les_Sauteurs.pdf (25.03.2019)

Siebert, Moritz / Wagner, Estephan (2016b): Les Sauteurs – Those Who Jump. Über einen Film von Moritz Siebert, Abou Bakar Sidibé und Estephan Wagner. In: *Bauwelt* 41, S. 40–45

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha (1991): *When the moon waxes red: Representation, gender, and cultural politics*. New York, Routledge

// Über den Autor

Sven Seibel ist Medien- und Kulturwissenschaftler, er forscht und lehrt am Institut für Kunst und visuelle Kultur der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. Von 2009 bis 2015 war er wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter am Institut für Medien- und Kulturwissenschaft der Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, wo er mit einer Arbeit über Relationalität als medienästhetische und repräsentationskritische Figur in Essay- und Installationsfilmen unter medienökologischen Voraussetzungen promoviert. Forschungsschwerpunkte: Relokalisierungs- und Transformationsprozesse künstlerischer Verfahren, dokumentarische Praktiken zwischen digitalem und politischem Wandel, Praxeologie und Geschichte des kollaborativen Films, ‚Nicht-Souverenität‘ als politische und mediale Denkfigur. Zuletzt erschienen: *Verfahren des Sich-Aussetzens*. Zur dokumentarischen (Neu-)Anordnung des Interviews. In: Maximilian Linsenmeier, Sven Seibel (Hg.): *Gruppieren, Interferieren, Zirkulieren*. Zur Ökologie künstlerischer Praktiken in Medienkulturen der Gegenwart. Bielefeld: transcript, 2019.

// FKW wird gefördert durch das Mariann Steegmann Institut und das Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts der Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// Lizenz

Der Text ist lizenziert unter der CC-BY-NC-ND Lizenz 4.0 International. Der Lizenzvertrag ist abrufbar unter: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.de>



VIDEO AGAINST THE MACHINE: LENS-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Lines, arrows and clusters, digits and data points. In contemporary art, refugees¹⁾ taking flight to Europe frequently appear in contemporary visual art in the form of abstract diagrammatic categories: caught in graphs, charts and diagrams. Lens-based artworks such as *In-Formation* (Harun Farocki 2005), *The Mapping Journey Project* (Bouchra Khalili 2008–2011) and *Friday Table* (Foundland 2013–14), for instance, all use maps, charts and graphs in order to reflect on forced migration to Europe, as well as its regulation by the EU. This representational strategy contrasts with numerous attempts by artists to construct empathic relationships between European viewers and refugees by forging identification through shared experiences.²⁾ What is more, the diagrammatic forms in recent art practices seem to respond to a politics of numbers that is, in the words of Nicholas de Genova et al., “exploited by national governments, EU institutions, as well as fear-mongering news media and right-wing populist political parties” in order to “fortify the more general staging of a spectacle of ‘invasion’ or ‘inundation’ conjured by images of seemingly desperate ‘foreign’ masses seeking entry to places where they ostensibly do not belong” (De Genova et al. 2016: 22).

— The constant circulation of accounts of dramatically rising numbers of recent migrants and refugee arrivals instill a sense of ‘crisis’ with regard to contemporary movements of people into ‘Europe’ (ibid: 21). Instead of raising understanding or offering Europeans the possibility to empathize with people seeking refuge in the EU, these threatening charts rather erase “the individuality and political subjectivity of people on the move” (ibid: 22). Turned into dots on a line or digits in a diagram, people crossing dangerous territories in order to reach Europe are no longer represented as human subjects at all; they are depicted as parts in a process that is bringing Europe into crisis.

— However, in spite of the fact that the ‘numbers game’ can help to sustain xenophobic politics, it can be argued that some artworks adopt this rhetoric not so much with the aim to (re) produce a sense of crisis (even though that may be an inevitable effect), but rather to point to a certain system that the notion of ‘refugee crisis’ sustains and justifies. This system is what I will call the *refugee machine* at Europe’s borders: a military-industrial-

1) I use the term *refugee* throughout this article to refer to people who have left their home countries in order to escape from poverty and/or violence. I consider refugees as migrants who have made an ‘involuntary choice’: their decision to take flight and move abroad was forced by disadvantageous, oftentimes life-threatening circumstances. See also note 7

2) For a reflection on the possibilities and pitfalls of empathic encounters with refugee experiences in art elsewhere, see: Houwen 2016.

surveillance complex that manages incoming refugees in a highly organized, processual manner. The threat of disorder and enduring instability that the notion of ‘crisis’ has come to signify in Europe are absent from this well-oiled machine; a machine in which numbers, graphs and charts are not only used as rhetorical tools, but function as signs in tracking down, identifying, monitoring and processing ‘foreign’ bodies as (bio)data so as to regulate migration to Europe.

— In this article, I study the military-industrial-surveillance complex at Europe’s borders as a machine that functions alongside and in response to the so-called refugee crisis, but that in itself is not in crisis at all. Following philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato’s definition of machinic systems (2014), I conceptualize the machine as a series of intertwined discursive/semiotic as well as non-discursive/material elements. In Lazzarato’s writings, the concept of the machine denotes an apparatus that does not depend on *techne* per se. Machinic systems can be technological, but also political, economic, social, or all of these at once – as the machinic system of capitalism that Lazzarato focusses on proves. Drawing from theories by Karl Marx, Gilles Deleuze and, most of all, Félix Guattari, Lazzarato defines the machine as a series of intertwined devices; an assemblage of multiplicities that work together as parts in a machine. Public institutions, factories, the media, and so on, can all be understood as (non-metaphorical) machines because they assemble people, procedures, semiotics, techniques, rules, etc. Together, discursive and non-discursive, semiotic and material components make up a whole that surpasses them (ibid: 82).

— When viewed through the lens of machine theory, the reduction of refugees to calculable formula and neatly arranged data packets cannot be seen as an isolated, purely discursive matter. It is part of a large machinic assemblage in which economic, judicial, social and technological components work together, producing material, immobilizing, de-subjectifying, as well as oftentimes lethal consequences for the human beings involved. Only after carefully studying the workings of this *refugee machine*, I argue, will it become possible to uncover possible modes of resistance against this controlling and objectifying system.

FIRE AND FLOWS: DOCUMENTARY PERSPECTIVES ON MACHINIC SUBJECTION

— In order to analyze the military-industrial-surveillance complex at Europe’s borders as a machinic system, I turn to two art-house documentary films which do exactly that. Nathalie Loubeyre’s *Flow Mechanics* (2016) and Morgan Knibbe’s

Those Who Feel the Fire Burning (2014)³⁾ analytically uncover intertwining parts of a large refugee-controlling system at work in Southern European countries. Whereas Loubeyre's movie can be defined as a documentary in what Bill Nichols (2001) calls the *observational mode*, because of its use of an unobtrusive camera, Knibbe's work is a poetic docufiction that combines documentary footage with a fictional narrator. What the films have in common is that they both position themselves in the afore discussed tendency within visual art to point out the processual character of 'refugee-management' in the EU. However, whereas many artworks (such as the aforementioned ones by Farocki, Khalili and Foundland) bring out the machinic workings of European refugee-control by way of graphs and diagrams, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel the Firing Burning* manage to do so without inserting numerical representations into their formal structure. It is rather through a structured mode of mapping, of outlining a complex machinic assemblage, bringing all its parts into view, that both movies can be regarded as forms of machine analysis that are very much in line with Lazzarato's machine theory (2014).

— In light of the refugee crisis, Lazzarato's theory is not only relevant because it enables the examination of seemingly heterogeneous, yet interrelated assemblages of control, but also because it unravels ways in which contemporary machines have the power to create and dismantle subjectivities. Unlike scholars following the *linguistic turn* in analytical philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Lazzarato does not understand subjectivity as a merely discursive construct that is the result of signifying operations. Following Guattari, he believes that subjectivity has a non-discursive, a-signifying, unnamable core that is existential, pathic and affective prior to being (or becoming) linguistic or cognitive. In a pre-personal and pre-linguistic phase, human beings can already experience an emergent self through affects, intensities and ways of feeling, even though there is not yet a division between subject and object. According to Lazzarato, this pre-personal, pre-individual core remains active and mutable in later stages of subject formation.

— A consequence of this understanding of subjectivity is the notion that the production, mutation or adaptation of (political) subjectivity are not necessarily discursive processes. For Lazzarato, this realization is of essential importance. Without discarding the role of language in subjectivation processes entirely, he urges political theorists to pay more attention to the non-discursive aspects of subjectivity: our present circumstances cannot be understood

³⁾ Abbreviated as *Those Who Feel* from here onwards.

or critiqued without it. Lazzarato claims that, under the conditions of global capitalism and in our increasingly technology- and media-saturated time, we have entered a machine-centric world in which the production of subjectivity takes place at the intersection of two modalities.⁴⁾ On the one hand, people are controlled and assigned to specific subject positions by way of discourse; a process Lazzarato labels *social subjection*. We are *subjected* to machines,” he writes, “when we, constituted as its users, are defined purely by the actions that the use of the machine demands” (2006a). Social subjection entails an allocation of roles. Even though we may feel alienated from these allocated roles, we cannot escape from being turned into individual subjects via categories such as identity, sex, profession and nationality.

— On the other hand, people are taken over *from the inside* as affects and sensations of, what Lazzarato calls, subjectivities’ pre-personal core are captured by machines (Lazzarato 2014: 38). Lazzarato labels this process of taking over from the inside *enslavement*. We are enslaved to a machine when we are turned into “a cog in the wheels, one of the constituent parts enabling the machine to function” (ibid). As opposed to the process of social subjection, the mechanisms of machinic enslavement are not aimed at subject constitution but rather dismantle and fragment the individual. Pre-subjective elements of human beings such as affects, emotions, perceptions, sensations, rhythms, and non-verbal bodily movements, function as parts of the machine, but without a singular subject as referent. Machinic enslavement does not bother with subject/object, words/things, nature/culture dualisms, and disregards distinctions between human and non-human operators (ibid: 26). On the level of machinic enslavement, fragmented human beings are not persons, but recurrent and interchangeable parts of a process.⁵⁾

— As an example of a machine that both subjects and enslaves its users, Lazzarato mentions the television. A television is a technological, but also an ideological and social machine that subjects its users by producing specific subject positions through enunciation (such as viewer/listener, or represented/speaking subject). At the same time, the enunciated subjects of the television are enslaved by the machine, because they become part of it by receiving and producing input and output, thus facilitating the transmission of information. The television machine works, for instance, on behalf of users operating the remote control; their choices are collected as data that influence programming. The affects, emotions, perceptions and physical actions of viewers as

4) See also Hesselberth et al. (2018) for a discussion of Lazzarato’s ideas in relation to contemporary issues of legibility.

5) Lazzarato turns to Deleuze’s notion of the *dividual* in order to further define this fragmentation: “subjection produces and subjects individuals, whereas in enslavement individuals become ‘dividuals’, and masses become samples, data [...]. The dividual ‘functions’ in enslavement in the same way as the ‘non-human’ component parts of technical machines” (Lazzarato 2014: 26).

well as of guests or hosts on screen are sent out and fed back into the machine in a loop that makes the machine run. On this level of machinic enslavement, viewers are sets of multiple elements that become part of the television network. Their affects, emotions, desires or simply their hands pressing the remote control do not need a single subject as referent in order to function as cogs in the machine.

— Whereas subjection takes place in “the register of ‘representation’ and ‘signification’ or ‘production of meaning’, both of which are organized by signifying semiotics (language) with the purpose of producing the ‘subject’, the ‘individual’, the ‘I’” (2006b, n.pag.), the process of machinic enslavement depends on a register organized by a-signifying semiotics that tune in directly to the body by means of a-signifying signs. Even though a-signifying signs remain more or less dependent on signifying semiotics, “at the level of their intrinsic functions they circumvent language and dominant social significations” (Lazzarato 2014, 40).⁶⁾ As “power signs” they make things happen, they produce changes by engaging material flows (of goods, or bodies, for instance). They have a direct, unmediated impact on the real without being routed through signification and representation. The bar code on a parking ticket for instance opens the garage’s lever, computer languages command technological machines to carry out certain tasks, a magnetically loaded strip allows you to travel by train in some countries. These a-signifying “power signs” are operational rather than representational. They produce direct material consequences, while bypassing signification (Lazzarato 2014, 85).

— In *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel*, the conjoined regimes of subjection and enslavement are mapped out by way of images. In *Those Who Feel*, the bird’s eye view of a moving camera scans over European sea-side cities, where it zooms in on different people, such as undocumented refugees in a detention center; administrators filing asylum applications; police chasing suspect foreigners in the streets; refugees living in dilapidated buildings that are watched by cameras; military officers with radios overseeing the loading of coffins of drowned refugees on a ship, while news crews are filming the bereaved.⁷⁾ *Flow Mechanics* traces fences and gates in indistinguishable places across Europe’s Mediterranean borders. The ‘foreign bodies’ behind these fences are regulated by military soldiers, policemen and Frontex officers, with the help of concerned citizens (who are on the look-out for strangers entering their villages), as well as watchdogs and surveillance technologies, all of which form part of a machinic

6) The circumvention of social significations is important, as it distinguishes Lazzarato’s notion of a-signifying signs (or, in other words, *power signs*) from performatives as defined by J. L. Austin. The performative speech act is a social act. In the words of Lazzarato, the performative entails a “social obligation” (2014: 170). A-signifying semiotics functions apart from social roles or meanings.

7) My use of the term ‘refugee’ is not in accordance with the much narrower European judicial meaning of the word, which indicates a legal status that many of the people in *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* do not have. I use ‘refugee’ in a broad sense instead of turning to categories such as ‘illegalized migrants’, ‘economic asylum-seekers’ or ‘undocumented immigrants’, so as not to reproduce the exclusion that is produced by the narrow definition of the term under EU Law. The process of distinguishing between legal/illegal is an element of the ‘refugee machine’ that I aim to ‘plug out’ from in my writing.

assemblage. Other identities have a place in the machine as well: a doctor treats ill refugees; a priest buries their corpses. These two men are linked to economic components of the machine (e.g., who pays for the medicines or coffins?), as well as to social ones (e.g., locals not accepting dead strangers in their cemeteries).

— Within the machinic assemblage of interrelated social, political, geographical, architectural, and technological components that becomes visible in both movies, a process of social subjection can be recognized. All represented persons have clear cut roles; they are defined by the actions expected of them within the machinic assemblage. What is more, the identity of the involved individuals is shown to be largely discursive in *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel*; identities are formed by the words with which the people in the movies talk about themselves and others, illustrating Lazzarato's claim that mechanisms of subjection depend on signifying semiotics (language). In *Flow Mechanics*, policemen for instance talk about themselves as "protectors" and about refugees as "strangers". A helping doctor in *Flow Mechanics*, on the other hand, speaks about refugees as patients in dire need of care. Such utterances by European law enforcers and aid workers produce binary schemes in which the identity of refugees is very much defined along the axes of active threat (to be resolved) and/or passive victim (to be helped). Yet, without denying their suffering or criminalization, refugees in both *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* do not speak about themselves as mere objects of care or control. By, for instance, discussing ways to make money, difficulties in border crossing, or successful attempts of others moving North, small communities of (mostly male) refugees appear as actors in larger economic and social migratory networks.

— However, even though the refugees in *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* are shown to defy surveillance systems and form social networks that resist passive victimhood, their networked agency cannot be understood as a *counter-machine* that functions in opposition to, or apart from, the EU military-industrial-surveillance complex. With Lazzarato's definition of the machine as an assemblage of heterogeneous components in mind, the refugees' actions and ways of living together cannot be seen apart from the push and pull with EU authorities, aid workers and journalists (including their technological, medical and discursive tools). These co-define their identity, or, in Lazzarato's terms, subjection. All are *plugged into* the same refugee machine.

— In *Those Who Feel* and *Flow Mechanics*, the autonomy of migration⁸⁾ is denied by way of cinematic devices. *Those Who Feel*

8) A concept discussed by for instance Casas-Cortes et al. (2015). In the words of Casas-Cortes et al., autonomy of migration refers to "the multiple and diverse ways in which migration responds to, operates independently from, and in turn shapes [...] apparatuses [of control] and their corresponding institutions and practices" (2015: 895). I would rather argue that migration and apparatuses of control shape *each other* and are therefore not operating independently at all. As intertwined mechanisms, they are part of the same machinic system.

suggests continuity and contiguity between the depicted refugees on the one hand, and European citizens and law enforcement on the other, through an absence of cuts. A smoothly floating camera hovers over cityscapes, revealing a network of streets that connects different groups of people. Their adjacency in time and space is emphasized by the fact that the moving images do not break up time and space either. The camera zooms in and out on the groups of people living in the same place, at the same time, with uninterrupted crane shots.

— In *Flow Mechanics*, on the other hand, the spatial and temporal interrelation between refugee ‘strangers’ and European ‘protectors’ is made apparent precisely by way of cuts. Cross-cuts between border officials and refugees draw a parallel between the two groups, especially when the cross-cuts are match-cuts. For instance, a shot of a male refugee walking towards the camera through the snow with a bag in his right hand, is cross-cut with a matching image of a Frontex officer scouring a similar white landscape, holding the leash of a watchdog in his right hand. Because of the similarity between the *mise-en-scène* of the two men within subsequent shots, it is unclear if the officer is following the refugee, or the other way around. Even though they are visually distinguishable, the two men seem to be walking the same route in the same pace, yet in a temporally unreconstructable order. This way, the film makes clear that the two men are involved in interrelated actions that form each other’s cause and effect. The men are different and oppositional, yet closely related, parts in the same machine in which refugees respond to border surveillance and border technologies are tethered to refugees’ strategies.

FILMING FRAGMENTS: MACHINIC ENSLAVEMENT — In addition to the process of social subjection, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* demonstrate how the refugee machine enslaves its ‘users’. Within the regime of enslavement, opposing or different people, such as refugees and Frontex officers, become equivalent cogs in a wheel. The filmic depiction of the loss of binary oppositions such as hunter–hunted, citizen–stranger, and lawful–illegal, illustrates Lazzarato’s claim that machinic enslavement does not bother with dualisms, and disregards distinctions between human and non-human operators. In *Flow Mechanics*, this can be seen in the functioning of video surveillance technologies. Thermal video cameras that trace down refugees in the dark are unable to distinguish between animals and human beings: groups of people crossing the land and flocks of birds crossing the sky

are both measured as objects with higher temperatures than the surroundings. As such, humans and animals appear on the video monitor as similar abstract white figures, captured within the square corners of the camera's viewfinder. Furthermore, not only animals and humans are shown as similar pieces of data, also video cameras and policemen appear as equivalent actors in surveillance practices. Shots of policemen scanning the land from their watchtower are matched by shots from high-angled video cameras doing the same.

— The abstract representations such as the ones produced by thermal cameras can be seen in light of Lazzarato's definition of a-signifying signs: they are not so much (or not in the first place) signs that produce meaning, but rather signs that intervene in reality in a direct manner. White figures of a certain size on the video screen function as a command. Like a bar code opening a lever or computer language directing a production process, the video measurements tell the police officers (enslaved as cogs in the wheel) to go to the border the camera is filming and to halt moving bodies there. The fact that the white marks possibly produce a number of additional meanings (e.g., refugees, threats, ghostlike figures) does not obliterate the fact that their functioning as command, as a *go*, in the refugee machine does not depend on signification.

— In *Flow Mechanics*, the video cameras that form a recurrent theme in the film are shown to be aided by a wide array of other instruments, such as CO₂ detectors, radars, sensors, and computer programs – all of which produce abstract a-signifying signs. “In this tele-techno-mediated surveillance context,” Joseph Pugliese writes, “refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants are seen as mere radar blimps, infrared blobs and anonymous numbers” (2013: 577). The presence of refugees is measured, and when they are captured, they are processed as pieces of data by computers. *Those Who Feel* shows how refugees' bodies are scanned and photographed, their data subsequently put in graphic forms and stored in computers connected to EURODAC's central database. Pugliese has aptly termed this database an anatomizing archive “of biometric-templates-as-‘body-bits’” (ibid: 587). I deploy the term ‘bits’ in both its *in-silico*, digitized sense and its metaphorical meaning of segmenting and anatomizing the body of the biometrically scanned subject. “This statist archiving of biometric ‘body bits’ fundamentally functions to dislocate the subject from their body, and through processes of networked classification and dissemination, precludes them from [...] agentic governance over

their own biodata” (ibid: 587). The graphs and diagrams store and organize these body-bits function as a-signifying *power signs*, because even though the dissection of bodies is only metaphorical, the effect of the data-packets is quite real: they preclude and allow bodies to cross borders.

— The audio track in *Those Who Feel* underscores the fragmentation of the individual on the refugee machine’s enslaving level. Soft voices whisper pieces of dreams, memories and sensations that are only loosely attached to refugees’ faces or bodies appearing on screen. It seems as if language can hardly be uttered anymore, and it certainly does not produce a coherent individual in these stilled and almost silent scenes. When one of the refugees breaches the silence with a loud voice, she laments, “I do not exist, I do not exist in this world!” Upon which she ties off her left arm (full of needle holes) with a cable in order to take a shot of heroin and retract in a state of psychic absence.

— *Flow Mechanics* emphasizes the lack of a stable, present, coherent *I* by shots of data units (scans, CO2 graphs, etc.) combined with auditory fragments about the amputation of frozen limbs and the collection of body parts. Hence, just like their subjectivities, the bodies of refugees are shown to fall apart. In fact, in both *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel*, the latter can be read as a result of the former. Images of body collection follow on images of data collection. As such, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* demonstrate how this machinic system of surveillance, marking and controlling, leads to bodily disintegration, and death.⁹⁾

NOT THIS AND BARELY THERE: COUNTER CAMERAS — As the term *flow* in Loubeyre’s film title indicates, the *refugee machine* functions in an ongoing rhythm, processing people effectively as input and output without any change or end in sight, yet with lethal consequences. Both *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* paint a bleak picture when it comes to resistance against this machine that holds everyone firmly in its destructive grip. Notably, some of the refugees in *Flow Mechanics* engage in critical analyses of the system they are part of. They, for instance, discuss how their motives for taking flight are caused by economic, military and political interventions of Northern countries that now refuse to let them in. *Those Who Feel* shows an inconspicuous form of resistance in a scene where refugees show each other video images on their mobile phones of friends climbing on board of a ferry in order to cross the Italian border. The technology that is such a dominant cog in the wheel when it comes to the objectification and control

9) A conclusion that is very much in line with Pugliese’s critique of the lethality of the EU’s integrated systems of surveillance.

of refugees, is now taken up by the objects of surveillance in order to show (and show off) their own successes in circumventing surveillance. Although still functioning largely within the parameters of the machine, refugees who turn the video camera from a tool of repression into a trophy-maker manage to take up one of the components of the refugee machine, namely video technology, and use it against the grain.

— This scene raises questions as to the position of both movies vis-à-vis their object(s) of representation. Moreover, the filmmakers place subjects in front of their lenses who are already under constant lens-based surveillance, documenting the documented. Are Loubeyre's and Knibbe's cinematic representations able to function apart from the machine they depict, or are they cogs in its wheel as well? This question puts forth a more general issue with respect to machine analysis. As Frederik Tygstrup puts it well: "Following Lazzarato, we could say that contemporary cultural analysis is not about reading what the objects we study are saying about something extraneous to them, but about reading how they retain a particular function in such contexts" (2018, 267). This latter mode of reading is also called for when it comes to *Those Who Feel* and *Flow Mechanics*.

— *Those Who Feel* was recorded with an instrument of surveillance: a drone camera. Therefore, the bird's eye perspective of the camera cannot be seen apart from the ubiquitous system of surveillance in the refugee machine. *Flow Mechanics'* camera also 'plugs into' the machine it attempts to depict. In order to bring the workings of the refugee machine into sight, Loubeyre's camera follows the surveilling gazes within the machinic system. Shots taken by her digital video camera are sutured to the searching look of border agents in shot-reverse shot patterns, thereby suggesting visual access to the agents' points of view. Also, grainy black and white video surveillance images are filmed up close in *Flow Mechanics*. As screen-filling images, they become part of the primary structure of the movie.

— However, the scene in *Those Who Feel* of refugees using video against the machine's grain can be read as mise-en-abyme for the functioning of *Those Who Feel* and *Flow Mechanics* themselves; the movies are cogs in the wheel, but cogs that act up, counter-cogs. In *Flow Mechanics*, a counter-act is produced in scenes where the camera suddenly cuts or swerves away from the machinic assemblage it is mapping. Shots of cameras, fences, and arrests are intersected by images of, for instance, the sky, plants, or abstract dark images. By intermittently showing images that

cannot be related to the refugee machine, the movie interrupts the act of mapping it is simultaneously carrying out. In addition, the cutaways from machinic elements suggest a form of judgement. It seems as though the camera accusingly turns away from the refugee machine, as if it can no longer bear to look at it and chooses to disengage itself from the system.

— This disengagement is enforced by way of cinematic editing techniques that turn the function of surveillance video even further around. In a scene that shows grainy surveillance footage of a boat overloaded with refugees who appear only as small pixels, a male survivor of a ‘left-to-die-boat’ looks back on crossing the Mediterranean Sea in an accusatory speech addressed to *you*, Europeans. Close-ups of the man alternate with images of the boat. At first, the images seem to match the man’s story, who tells how his boat was approached by coastguards. The video footage, so it seems, shows the perspective of these coastguards, looking through viewfinders at the boat. This assumption, however, is undermined when a mismatch arises between the story and the images. The coastguards abandoned the boat, the man explains, yet grainy surveillance images still accompany close-ups of the internal narrator. This mismatch invites reading the relation between the man and the surveillance footage according to the conventional narrative film principle of *suture*: when a character is looking at or describing something (such as memories), subsequent shots fill in his or her point of view. In *Flow Mechanics*, grainy surveillance images are *repurposed* as personal memories. This is confirmed all the more when the man tells about the appearance of a helicopter in the sky, which was a moment of hope and relief: “Now we are saved.” His words are accompanied by shots of an aircraft, in exactly the same grainy quality as the images of the boat, yet from a low angle that corresponds with the position of the man when he was on the boat. Thus, the video images appear to express the focalization of this refugee.

— In light of Lazzarato’s machine theory, such repurposing of video surveillance technology for the expression of affective and emotional perceptions can be read as a form of resistance to, if not a bringing into crisis of, the refugee machine. As explained, Lazzarato argues that machinic enslavement involves a process in which individuals are taken over from *the inside*, by a machinic system determining and using our affects, emotions and perceptions. Surveillance technologies are an example par excellence in this regard: “The cycle of fear, anxiety and panic penetrating the atmosphere and tonality in which our ‘surveillance societies’

are steeped are triggered by [a-signifying] sign machines; these machines appeal [...] to the nervous system, the affects, the emotions” (2006b). The affects and emotions that the machine causes, Lazzarato explains, are also used by it as cogs in the wheel. Fear and panic are, in part, what makes surveillance systems effective. *Flow Mechanics* manages to turn video from a technology that causes negative feelings, affects and perceptions, and moreover fragments people into pixelated objects, into a technology that can be used to express the meaningful memories and feelings (fear, despair, but also hope) of a person. *Those Who Feel* takes up the same project of turning video against the machine, yet here the appropriation of affects takes place on a different level: that of machinic enslavement. Whereas in *Flow Mechanics*, the focalized video images are tied to an individual, *Those Who Feel* presents a focalizing narrator who is not present as a whole or coherent subject. At first, the male Persian voice of this invisible narrator is reminiscent of the male ‘voice of God’ that conventionally accompanies so-called expository documentaries.¹⁰⁾ Yet, whereas the voice-over in such documentary films speaks to the audience in a loud, authoritative manner, explaining a problem and its solution in a clear-cut linear argument, the narrator in *Those Who Feel* does not present a coherent, instructive ‘truth’. Rather, the soft voice-over asks questions which express a sense of being lost, and moreover murmurs seemingly unrelated sentences that have a polyphonic character even though they are uttered by one voice. This voice ties the drone images to the viewpoint of a ghost, who whispers that life and death are equally strange to him, while we look at the world through his eyes. After drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, this refugee flies through cities as a specter that is only visible to a little girl. Dispossessed of his body, the ghost visits others who are barely there: dispossessed refugees leading spectral lives, hiding in decomposed buildings or locked up in detention centers while their bodies threaten to fall apart through drug use, poverty, or datafication.

— *Flow Mechanics* also acknowledges the liminal state of barely living that is enforced upon refugees by the refugee machine which even obliterates the life-death dualism. In Loubeyre’s movie, refugees say that they are already dead, or “seventy percent on the way to death”, while images show body bags, body parts and traces of refugee bodies left in trucks: indexes of present absences. However, in *Flow Mechanics* the expression and re-appropriation of affects through *videomatic* focalization takes place at the level of social subjection. The speaking and focalizing subject is

¹⁰⁾ See also Nichols (2001).

a subject: a visible person who is able to interpellate “you” as an “I” in a public speech. In *Those Who Feel*, on the contrary, affects and perceptions are expressed from a register where “I”s do not exist. Although not completely disconnected from the register of signifying semiotics, the fragmented text whispered by the ghost describes affects and sensations that are not visualized in the images: “The soft smell of grass. A fresh morning breeze. Our hearts are beating fast. A warm, sunny day.” These impressions are not rooted in one subject; they could be the narrating ghost’s or belong to the ‘ghosts’ he is watching, while other voices at times intersect his speech. In addition, he visually focusses on aspects that Lazzarato defines as *pre-personal* components. Zoom-shots suggest that the focalisor is pulled towards the laughter, the rhythms of dance and music, and the physical movements of the refugees he watches. It is important to notice that these feelings, sensations and rhythms are not merely the fear, anxiety and panic that the *refugee machine’s* surveillance technologies produce. Without at any moment glorifying the liminal lives of refugees, *Those Who Feel* turns a drone camera into a device that also expresses affects and movements of “those who feel the fire burning” that retain some freedom vis-à-vis the refugee machine.

—— In addition, these evasive affects and sensations have a disruptive effect on the refugee machine on a temporal level, as it is unclear if they belong to the past as memories, express sensations produced in the present, or relate to dreams of a future. As such, they cannot be integrated into the linear temporality of the refugee machine with its ongoing push and pull between refugees moving North and EU authorities responding to this. At the end of *Those Who Feel*, the images slow down, and as they turn dark and silent, the ghost says: “All moments melt together in one single instant, on my way to love.” At that one instant, the machine stops.

CONCLUSION —— According to Lazzarato, one of the main shortcomings of contemporary political theory is that it can only envisage resistance and emancipation in a logocentric way; as something that is created with language by subjects who are themselves a product of language. Through small interventions in the application of a visual technology that holds a dominant position in the refugee machine, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* show that resistance can be performed and thought otherwise. As the refugee machine comprises discursive and non-discursive elements, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* respond to it on signifying and a-signifying levels, involving bodily actions

(turning the camera away, turning it off) and narrative strategies (applying narrative editing conventions, ‘film language’). Paradoxically, these narrative strategies affirm once more that resistance does not only involve discourse and signifying semiotics: the *videomatic* focalization created in the two documentaries does not so much give voice to the represented refugees; it expresses affects, bodily sensations and feelings. As the refugee machine does not merely subject through language, but also enslaves by tuning into the body and its a-signifying sensations, countering control and dispossession necessarily involves the repossession of non-discursive affects as well. Moreover, the fact that the disrupting affects of the speaking *and* feeling refugees in *Those Who Feel* cannot be attributed to unified individuals, demonstrates that resistance can also be performed by fragmented forms of being-in-between. In sum, as counter-cogs plugged into an enslaving assemblage, *Flow Mechanics* and *Those Who Feel* tentatively open up possibilities of opposition and change by reconfiguring the refugee machine.

// References

- Casas-Cortes, Maribel / Cobarrubias, Sebastian / Pickles, John (2015): Riding Routes and Itinerant Borders: Autonomy of Migration and Border Externalization. In: *Antipode*. Vol. 47, Issue 4, pp. 894–914
- De Genova, Nicholas, et al. (2016): Europe/Crisis: New Keywords of ‘the Crisis’ in and of ‘Europe’. In: *Near Futures Online*. Vol.1, pp. 1–45. <http://nearfuturesonline.org/europecrisis-new-keywords-of-crisis-in-and-of-europe/> (12 March 2019)
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (2006a): The Machine. In: Derieg, Aileen, et al. (eds), *Transversal Texts: Machines and Subjectivation*. Vienna, EIPCP. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lazzarato/en> (21 March 2019)
- Idem (2006b): ‘Semiotic Pluralism’ and the New Government of Signs: Homage to Félix Guattari. In: Derieg, Aileen, et al. (eds), *Transversal Texts: Machines and Subjectivation*. Vienna, EIPCP. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0107/lazzarato/en> (21 March 2019)
- Idem (2014): *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. South Pasadena, Semiotext(e)
- Hesselbert, Pepita / Houwen, Janna / Vos, Ruby de / Peeren, Esther (eds.) (2018): *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines*. Leiden, Brill
- Houwen, Janna (2016): An Empty Table and an Empty Boat: Empathic Encounters with Refugee Experiences in Intermedial Installation Art. In: *American, British & Canadian Studies*. Vol. 27, Issue 1, pp. 44–73
- Nichols, Bill (2001): *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press
- Pugliese, Joseph (2013): Technologies of Extraterritorialisation, Statist Visuality and Irregular Migrants and Refugees. In: *Griffith Law Review*. Vol. 22, Issue 3, pp. 571–97
- Tygstrup, Frederik (2018): Representational Assemblages: Forms, Concerns, Affects. In: Hesselberth, Pepita et al. (eds.), *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, pp. 263–274
- Vogl, Joseph (2018): “The History of the Notion of Crisis.” Interview conducted and translated by Sven Fabré and Arne Vanraes. In: De Cauwer, Stijn (ed.), *Critical Theory at a Crossroads: Conversations on Resistance in Times of Crisis*. New York, Columbia University Press, pp. 61–74

// About the Author

Janna Houwen is Assistant Professor of Film and Literary Studies at Leiden University. She is the author of *Film and Video Intermediality: The Question of Medium Specificity in Contemporary Moving Images* (Bloomsbury, 2017), the co-editor of *Legibility in the Age of Signs and Machines* (Brill, 2018) and *From Crisis to Critique: Languages of Resistance, Transformation, and Futurity in Mediterranean Crisis-Scapes* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2020), and has published on, among other things, cinematic and televisual representations of terrorism and violence, and lens-based artistic interventions in the so-called refugee crisis.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// License

This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



DRAMATURGIES OF THE 'OTHER': SELF-MAKING & SENSE-MAKING IN CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

The refugee issue has inevitably affected contemporary theatre, as manifested in its choice of topic and internalized mission. Plays that dramatize the refugee experience proliferate all across Europe, driven by a commitment to challenge prejudices and wrongdoings against refugees and to advocate their rights. These plays often engage refugees as informants, building on their actual testimonies and experiences (Fragkou 2018) in the tradition of documentary theatre (Forsyth & Megson 2009).¹⁾ More recently, a new category has gained ground, including theatre productions that involve refugees as 'experts' on stage, offering their professional or personal insights and co-shaping the play's narrative (Garde & Mumford 2016).²⁾

— Theatre is, structurally and intellectually, a place that elicits empathy through the physical, intimate coexistence between performers and audience. Documentary theatre in particular, can potentially intensify this empathy: its audience is aware that it concerns stories and experiences of actual people whose distinctive faces cannot be ignored. However, refugee representations on stage often reveal the face of a victim, employing a language similar to that of humanitarian discourse. While we can in principle acknowledge theatre makers' well-meaning effort to invoke empathy, denounce injustice and stir social change, a significant part of contemporary dramaturgy leans on awareness of the suffering, invoking audience's emotional response through the dramatization of traumatic experiences. However, this *empathetic unsettlement* usually has a temporary effect and does not necessarily enable political or moral action; it might well "function for an alibi for lack of action" and "risk offering up traumatic representation for vicarious voyeurs" (Little 2011: n. pag.). Alison Jeffers attempts a thorough look into the ways contemporary (English and Australian) theatre stages the refugee identity, and poses the same pressing question that guides this article: "How are theatre practitioners to honor the experiences of the participants [...] and challenge prejudice against those participants without resorting to demonstrations of victimhood?" (2012: 143).

— As a person that moves between scholarship (social anthropology) and artistic creation (documentary theatre making), I try to remain conscious of the power relations at play in both

1) Documentary theatre is rooted in nonfictional, researched reality. Its script is composed of original or archival resources.

2) The term 'expert' was coined by the German theatre collective Rimini Protokoll and refers to their work with "experts of the everyday life" („Experten des Alltags"). Examples of suchlike plays in a Greek context include, among others, *Case Farmakonisi or The Right of Water* (2015) by A. Azas & M. Bouziouri and *We Are The Persians* (2015) by Y. Markopoulou.

areas and the subsequent responsibility for the narratives that we produce. A major part of my work attests to the need to move beyond simplified humanitarian messages about people of refugee background and to invent a counter-storytelling that replaces short-lived compassion with a culture of intimacy and acknowledgement of people's agency, expertise and multifaceted identities. Given its possibilities for collectively-informed artistic creation, documentary theatre might open a small crack in this direction, additionally fueled by the ethical and methodological principles of modern ethnography as this article will address later on.

— At the same time, documentary theatre remains a slippery territory, dealing with real people and sensitive stories which unfold around a traumatic core. Prominent scholars and practitioners maintain a critical stance on documentary theatre, recognizing the dangers of “titillating an audience at someone's expense” (Soans 2008: 36) and reflecting on whether it is “inherently exploitive or voyeuristic” (Hammond & Steward 2008: 12). Documentary theatre makers are indeed in a constant pursuit of a delicate balance: they aspire to create a theatrically engaging and impactful work that honors the trust of its participants and audience without succumbing to the lures of hyper-aestheticization and sensationalism. The need to achieve this balance in refugee-centered documentary theatre productions becomes all the more persistent, given the proliferation of a Eurocentric, victimizing discourse on the refugee ‘other’.

— The article reflects exactly on the staging of the ‘traumatic real’ (Little 2010) and the representational practices of victimhood which contemporary theatre occasionally reserves for migrants and refugees, attempting to highlight some of the ethical and political implications entailed in these practices. My analysis – which is mainly informed by the Greek context – does not provide a comprehensive examination of certain plays (case-studies); it draws, instead, from my ethnographic/creative encounters with people involved in the theatre practice and the impact that victimhood-oriented dramaturgies have on them.³⁾ The article goes on to propose a documentary theatre approach that aspires to challenge the representational modalities of vulnerability and trauma by turning the stage into a self-reflective space for critical creativity. The proposed approach was put together in the documentary theatre workshop series *From Field to Stage: Dramaturgies of the Other* that I developed in 2018.⁴⁾

— The workshop problematizes the figure of the refugee as a victim and sets to explore stage alternatives to the ‘victimhood’-

3) All names are altered to preserve informants' anonymity and confidentiality.

4) The workshop has so far been realized in the framework of i. Warsaw Biennale, in collaboration with the Warsaw Museum of Modern Art, April 11–17, 2018; ii. Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival, with the support of the Greek Film Center, March 2–8, 2019; iii. Hellenic Theatre/Drama Education Network, Theatre Summer Camp, Pelion, August 25–31, 2019.

narrative. It is primarily addressed to creative professionals in the fields of theatre and cinema (directors, dramatists, scriptwriters, actors), and reflects my aspiration, on the one hand, to contribute to the shaping of emerging dramaturgies and, on the other, to improve my own work through a process of mutual learning. At this point, I need to state that in no way I am suggesting that the entirety of contemporary dramaturgy portrays the refugee identity through the lenses of victimhood. My aim is to stir a fruitful discussion on the risks, intricacies and tensions underpinning refugee – and previously migrant – representations on stage, and proceeding from this premise, to elaborate on the new directions that the encounter of documentary theatre with ethnography opens, in regard to the dramatisation of the ‘other’.

STAGING VICTIMHOOD: IS THE REFUGEE THE NEW IMMIGRANT?

— Some years ago, I took on a PhD that prompted me to revisit a previously familiar space – stage – as a field of anthropological knowledge. In brief, my thesis focuses on the identity, artistic expression and reception of Greece-based theatre artists of migrant background.⁵⁾ While in the field, I made an observation regarding contemporary Greek theatre and its relation to migration: before the late 2000’s, when immigrants first took the stage as professional writers, directors and/or performers of their own works, they had featured as the *dramatis personae* in plays written and staged by Greek artists who reflected on the transition of Greece into a migrant receiving society.⁶⁾

— For more than a decade (early 1990’s to early 2000’s), the dominant stereotypes Greek society had reserved for its migrants occupied the two extremes of the ‘victim or threat’ dipole: on the one end, we encounter the image of the poor, miserable immigrant who is willing to take any job in order to survive, while enduring prejudice and humiliation. On the other end, we come across the dangerous *lathrometanastis*; a derogative term used to denote the ‘clandestine migrant’ who is “quasi-automatically associated to criminal behaviour” (Kokali 2011: 170). Greek playwrights generally opted for a victimhood-driven narrative, as a way to expose the misconceptions of immigrants and the negative impact on them.

— The first plays with relevant content appeared in 1997, the topic peaked in the mid-2000’s.⁷⁾ With a few exceptions, they are works of pure fiction. Comedies – the first to stage representations of a new trans-cultural social reality – are basically concerned with parodying Greeks and their xenophobic, snobbish or hostile

5) The thesis, entitled ‘Theatre Makers with Migrant Background: Representations of Identity and Artistic Expression in Contemporary Greek Theatre – Towards an Anthropology of Intimacy’ (Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Dpt. of Social Anthropology) explores if and how the migrant experience has informed artists’ work in relation to topic, approach and aesthetics. Moreover, it examines the representation and accreditation practices reserved for migrant theatre artists in association with the concepts of victimization and exoticism.

6) In the early ‘90s, upon the collapse of communism, Greece, traditionally an immigrant-exporting country turned into an immigrant-destination country.

7) Indicative plays by Greek playwrights include: *Dads with Rum* (1997) & *Evros Across* (2000) by T.Reppas-M.Papathanasiou, *Unshaved Chins* (2006) by G.Tsiros, and *Here* (2007) by G.Nanouris. (Translation titles: MB)

attitude towards immigrants. It is thus the Greek character that comes under scrutiny, whereas the migrant character serves as the tinder that sparks the pathologies of Greek society. Social or psychological dramas, on the other hand, build their dramaturgical arc on migrants' arduous lives, informed by Greeks' prejudice and ill treatment. In some of these plays, characters lack depth and development. They are predictable, because they lean on stereotypes for migrants used in real life.

— The representation of migrants on stage mainly focuses on male characters. When female characters appeared on stage for the first time, they were basically informed by stereotypes that are mainly associated with their assumed position in the labor market. On the one hand, they appeared as cheap and docile domestic workers. On the other hand, they were represented as prostitutes or victims of trafficking networks, young and naïve nationals of ex-socialist countries seduced by the promise of a better life. In whichever context, they appeared as passive, lacking agency and subject to gender violence and sexual harassment⁸⁾.

— Greek new drama on migration abounds with undocumented migrants, lower class workers, or sexually abused women. Stories of trauma, misfortune and exploitation prevail. In this light, a certain skepticism emerges: is it possible that artists maintain oversimplified or stereotyped perceptions about immigrants in real life? Contemporary dramaturgy's growing fascination for real stories, and the impact it has on its protagonists makes the question even more relevant:

"I don't enjoy this obsession with my migrant identity. Some time ago, I participated in a theatre group and the director, in every single rehearsal would go on and ask me: 'How did you get here? Do you miss home? Tell us about your experience; it must have been tough, right?' Everyday I was addressed the same questions. For months, I was pushed into talking about private stuff [...]. I felt cheated and violated, and decided to leave the group. Naïve me! I thought I was hired for my qualifications, not my story."

(Nadia, Bulgarian actress)⁹⁾

— It seems that in the eyes of her director, Nadia was the perfect source for a good, moving story. He was looking for spectacular drama for his play on home and exile and her role was to provide it. In the end, Nadia chose not to surrender to the expectations that

8) More recently, documentary theatre has attempted to problematise the stereotyped representation of female immigrants, for instance in *Clean City (2016)* by A. Azas-P.Tsinikoris and *Amarynthos (2018)* by M. Bouziouri.

9) Personal interview, Athens, 2012 (PhD research diary excerpt)

would have turned her body into a “site of an incorporated history” (Butler 1997: 152), forged and forcefully imposed by others. In the course of our discussion, Nadia emphasized that she did not have a story of misfortune to satisfy her director with in the first place. As a child of economic migrants, she had a smooth transition in Greece and grew up in a loving family environment with no significant problems whatsoever. “In fact, the most traumatic event I have ever experienced was my participation in this theatre group and my treatment as an object of pity.

— Today, Nadia is no longer active in acting, like a number of other female migrant actresses of her generation. Can it be that their ethnic labeling had something to do with their withdrawal? It is striking to observe that in the following years, the force-fed image of victimhood was transposed to a new ethnic subject: the *refugee*. Let me illustrate that with a second example:

„If I wanted to watch a migrant drama, I would have turned my TV on. It makes me mad how artists fail to see anything beyond our hardships. Suffering is very convenient cause it’s stimulating. What is your point? To make audiences cry? Sympathize with the poor, miserable refugee? Refugees are human beings and live in the margins of our society, hallo! What a discovery! Did you care a tiny bit to know a little more about us, before presenting us with a fake name – when not nameless – and a tear-dropping label? Did you care to ask if we want to be constantly reminded of our precarious state? Since you live off my identity, I want to be reminded of positive things and I want you to learn about my dreams and my culture and the things I am good at and the things we might have in common.”

(Arman, Iranian actor)¹⁰⁾

— Seven years ago, Arman reached Greece on a student visa, anticipating an exciting career in the country “that gave birth to theatre and philosophy” – those were his exact words. But Greece did not quite live up to his expectations. Soon enough, he realized that what was reserved for him was not a career as an actor but as a refugee. However, Arman does not identify with the refugee label: “I did not leave my country a refugee, but funnily enough, I became a refugee here, in your free, democratic country”. This became apparent to him during his first encounters with native directors, who repeatedly approached him for the role of ‘the Arab’,

10) Personal interview, Athens, 2016
(PhD research diary excerpt)

‘the exile’ or ‘the stranded refugee’. Whenever he tried to explain that he was a privileged Iranian guy whose wealthy, supportive parents sustained his studies abroad, they would shift focus and ask about teleported instances of human rights abuse that take place in his country. “It’s pointless. They are only prepared to hear what they want to hear”, he concluded. Speaking of expectations: what exactly do we want to hear as audience when it comes to the refugee issue? And what do we wish to say as artists?

— A growing part of politically engaged theatre has already been offering relevant works. Among them, a popular trend is the staging of the original text or adaptation of Greek ancient tragedies such as *Antigone*, *The Suppliants*, *The Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* in order “to emphasize the plight of the dispossessed [...] and comment on the current refugee situation” (Wilmer 2018: 13). Another emerging category arises as part of wider educational, empowerment or awareness programs that draw on community/participatory theatre activities and techniques (such as devised theatre).¹¹⁾ In majority, these plays develop from a sustained period of work with refugee participants, mainly children, adolescents and women, and are based on testimonies and biographical material. Overall, the quest for personal stories is taking the lead in refugee-focused dramaturgies, both in conventional professional theatre productions and social intervention contexts. Some of these works, assumedly in an effort to raise awareness, evoke empathy and stimulate solidarity, often employing a victimizing narrative that builds on suffering and trauma, similar to that previously reserved for immigrants.

— Undoubtedly, theatre cannot stand indifferent to the wrongdoings and challenges of the real world. However, it is hard to avoid a certain reservation as to whether a repertoire that opts for “a preoccupation with the experience of loss and a privileging of trauma as a mode of knowledge” (Salverson 2001: 122) manages to disrupt the normative categorization of the refugee subject and to produce an aesthetic of critical encounter. In this light, my scepticism is not aimed at the chosen subject matter *per se*, but rather at its enactment and its imprint on a sociopolitical level. In my view, refugee-as-victim-led dramaturgies fail to offer heterogeneous and heterodox renderings of the refugee identity/experience; rarely do we see on stage a transgressive refugee character that resists the reductive clichés of *refugeeness*. Such clichés are further intensified by visual conventions such as the projection of ‘refugees in rubber boats’ footage or the ‘dress code’ of refugee characters/protagonists, who appear on stage wearing

11) In Greece, suchlike theatre-based activities and events have been organized, among others, by the Greek National Theatre and the Municipal Theatre of Piraeus.

backpacks, life jackets or low thermal blankets. In this context, theatre makers may turn the stage into a magnifying glass of social reality but fail to re-imagine it. They don't imagine change. Their plays stage injustice but do not stage visions of an alternative, wishful reality. Instead of "suggesting practical new possibilities" (Sierz 2011: 242), they assume there is no feasible way for refugees to escape their arduous realities.

— A last aspect to take into account while working with 'real people' in theatre is the psychological impact that the quest for personal stories might have on the subjects. While in Shatila refugee settlement, a group of Syrian women who had been approached by a foreign theatre group that was developing a play on domestic violence, told me how upset they became during the interviews: "We were interrogated in a persisting, manipulative manner. They literally forced us to confirm their assumptions. A woman who had problems at home broke down in one of the meetings. They came, took our stories and left."¹² As Diana Meyers has argued (2016), asking a person to share sensitive personal data in an insensitive manner might expose them to the revival of traumatic memories with serious implications for their emotional or psychological health.

UNSTAGING VICTIMHOOD: A CRITICAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN DOCUMENTARY THEATRE AND MODERN ETHNOGRAPHY

— If theatre makers are determined to move from trauma to more nuanced and under-represented aspects of the refugee condition – for all the reasons that this article has highlighted – it would be helpful to critically revisit both our positionality and intentionality while 'making stories' about/from real people's experiences. The encounter of documentary theatre with ethnography might open up new possibilities in this direction. By default, documentary theatre shares some structural characteristics with the ethnographic endeavor: it requires an extensive research phase to formulate its core subject and structure its dramaturgy, it utilizes the same research tools and practices (informal conversations, interviews, archive material, audiovisual footage etc), and it relies on experts/informants' inputs to build its story. Beyond their obvious similarities though, they have something else in common: the challenge entailed in the act of 'speaking for others'. What in contemporary anthropological praxis is known as a 'crisis of representation' (Clifford & Marcus 1986) is equally and persistently troubling documentary theatre and, in the context of this article, its representational modes of refugee experience.

¹² Personal interview, Beirut, 2015 (in the framework of *Traces* documentary theatre project)

— I do not want to suggest that ethnography can provide copy-pasted solutions to refugee-centered dramaturgies, but it can serve as a point of departure for a new generation of politically engaged theatre makers who remain aware of their positionality and how it informs their creative interactions with refugees as well as their work¹³⁾. Ethnography's enduring quest to reflect on its own conditions of knowledge production and representation (Clifford 1983) and to disrupt the authoritative voice of the omniscient yet invisible ethnographer has translated into research/writing techniques that expose not only the process of knowledge production but also the ethnographer throughout the ethnographic text. The last part of my contribution attempts to display exactly how these techniques can be re-contextualised and adapted for the stage. In this effort, I will use examples from the workshop series *From Field to Stage: Dramaturgies of the Other*, which, as mentioned in the introduction, builds on the intellectual convergences between documentary theatre and ethnography to counter 'victimhood'-narratives.

THE ARTIST IS VISIBLE: UNFOLDING THE PROCESS OF THEATRE MAKING

— Julie Salverson argues that “[a]rtists working in popular theatre tend to eliminate ourselves from the very participatory process we invoke so urgently” (2001: 120). Can documentary theatre, sensitive to the hierarchical structures of representation, expose the artist to the audience? Filewood answers that it can, when it “tends to put the process by which it is created into the fore by including references to that process within the performance itself” (1987: ix-x). His response reminds us of ethnography's concept of reflexivity and its firm preoccupation with how “the ‘experientiality’ of the experience is constituted” (Crapanzano 2006: 397). Modern ethnographers observe themselves while observing their field, saluting Schechner's proposition that “[e]thnography demands a double vision, inside and outside simultaneously or alternately” (1985: 109). They infuse their texts with fragile moments of awkwardness, uncertainty or disappointment. They address the effect their presence has on their subjects, and the other way around.

— In a similar fashion, artists of documentary theatre who obtain, shape and present the stories of others, can choose to remain hidden behind a privileged positionality or to become visible instead. This act of visibility acknowledges the ethical challenges and practical limitations of dealing with personal stories by putting fragments of the theatre-making process on stage.

13) The article does not look into the emerging work of refugee theatre makers, which constitutes an interesting field of inquiry. The number of theatre projects/events produced by refugees, often with support of established theatres or festivals, is rising sharply.

— During the workshop the opportunity to talk about this difficult process arose when Adam, an English participant currently residing in Warsaw, returned to class disappointed, and announced that the assigned interview hadn't worked out and that he had nothing to share with the group.¹⁴⁾ Adam had intended to present Salim, a young man from Bangladesh who had reached Poland a couple of years ago and now worked in a local kebab shop near Adam's flat. "I wasn't able to learn anything about his life. I messed it up. I felt so awkward and embarrassed!" Adam exclaimed. I told him that we often end up with seemingly non-productive interviews in both fields (ethnography - documentary theatre), yet such 'failures' help us reflect on the process: the timing, the place, our own attitudes and feelings as well as those of others. Adam was finally convinced to 'revisit' his encounter with Salim and here is a small excerpt of what he shared:

14) During the workshop's preparatory phase, participants are encouraged to interview a person with a refugee experience, and write a text that introduces this person to the group.

I first met him in February, when I had just arrived; It was really comforting to speak to another non-native citizen... I went to the shop yesterday at around 6pm to buy some chips and to speak to him, explaining the intentions of the workshop and the piece of theatre we are creating. The shop was very busy; The music that was playing may have been a Bengali radio station... I had an immediate feeling that this was not going to be the intimate, one-on-one conversation I'd become used to. I found the place so overwhelming that I couldn't figure out how to adjust my approach to him. Perhaps because I was trying to explain the workshop in a way that would be not misleading to him, I don't think I did a great job of explaining it. It went something like:

Salim: Hey! Hello! How are you?

Me: Good, good... how have you been?

Salim: Fine! Adam!?

Me: Salim!

Salim: Oh, you remember me!

He was happily surprised I remembered his name.

Me: Erm.. I'm doing a workshop next week...about people from a background... who are in Warsaw but are not Polish. I was wondering if you'd be interested in, like, me... talking to you or... ha...

Salim: I have no time... always busy.

Me: Ah I see, you have no time, but could I come in to the shop and talk to you, or...?

Salim: No because I... our owner no permission, it is not permitted.

Me: Oh, right, okay!

Salim: Because the environment is not..

Me: Oh no, okay.

Salim: Sorry.

He seemed stressed by me asking – his smile was there but there was an undertone of anxiety. I think he felt as if he was being watched, and was obviously nervous about his job security. My naive expectation that he might take me on a tour around his shop now seemed to be a wild, implausible notion. I realized I would not even be able to take his voice with me...

— Adam gave us access to the ‘behind-the-scenes’ process of documentary theatre making. He chose to become visible and expose himself by acknowledging the “personal inadequacy and social failure” (Hume & Mulcock 2004: xii) on the part of the artist/researcher who tries to approach another person and finds himself in “awkward social spaces” (ibid: xi). In a sense, his account transposed the focus from the vulnerability of the refugee subject to the vulnerability of the artist and his inadequacy, discomfort and failure to establish intimacy while trying to assemble his stage narrative.

THE ARTIST IS VISIBLE: BIOGRAPHIZING THE SELF — At some point during the workshop, participants were asked the question: “Have you ever experienced a ‘state of otherness?’” In essence, they were invited to introspect and reflect on familiar experiences, past and present, loosely or directly associated with our subject matter (refugee condition). The question was not meant to make a ‘we are all refugees’ claim and certainly did not stem from a guilt-driven desire to exorcise privilege or power by means of some abstract intellectual introspection. It rather aimed to stimulate, on the one hand, an evocative reflection on what it means to share sensitive or even traumatic personal experiences in public and, on the other hand, to transpose the focus from the unfamiliar outsider to the unfamiliar within oneself. Participants were encouraged to draw on their own biographies in the tradition of autoethnography¹⁵:

¹⁵ As a research practice, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. The author draws on and systematically analyzes personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand and illustrate cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis 2004).

in quest of the 'other', they looked at themselves. The works they wrote and performed were genuine samples of what we call 'autoethnographic performance'¹⁶ (Spry 2011).

The first person to come forward was Monika, a Polish participant who shared her personal experience of a rather symbolic 'refugee condition', enforced on her in a transitional phase in her life:

The story dates back to 2011. I was excited to follow a new trajectory of my life; studies in Germany; but after one of many repeated stays in hospitals at that time, my grandma passed away. She had always played a very important role in my life. Everyone encouraged me to get to Germany despite the funeral, because in German culture, punctuality is a strong demand. However, I decided to stay and take part in the ceremony, and therefore I came late for classes. When I entered the classroom everything seemed normal. Except that the space was divided into groups. German students were sitting on the left side of the tables, and the right side was reserved for the foreign students – a mix of Erasmus students, and students from Eastern Europe, with one Pakistani girl. I took a seat close to a German student, because I didn't have my textbook yet. All of a sudden I felt paralyzed, because it quickly turned out that I encroached upon alien territory and both sides of the table were staring at me with question marks in their eyes. After class, when heading back home, one of my classmates said: ‚Ich dachte, Polen sind gut in Feldarbeiten‘, which can be translated into English as ‚Polish people are good at fieldwork‘ [...].

—— Monika shared her experience of alienation/stigmatisation/exclusion as a foreign student from Poland during her studies in Germany. Her autobiographical piece surfaced in the context of a class about refugee-centered dramaturgies that seek to challenge the binaries between speaking about the 'other' and speaking for the 'self'. The 'state of otherness' question, while acknowledging the limitations of dichotomies ('us/others') with reference to the refugee representation, served as a stimulus for a self-reflective discussion among the group in relation to the concepts and contents of 'exile' and 'vulnerability'.

WHAT DOES A REFUGEE LOOK LIKE? —— The ultimate objective of the workshop has been to equip emerging theatre professionals

16) In autoethnographic performance (also known as autoethnodramatic performance), playwrights' personal memories and experiences become sources for the dramatic text, which is, conventionally, performed by themselves. See, for example, the work of Deidre Heddon (2008).

with tools that allow them to conceive, dramatise and stage counter-narratives that bring forward non-saturated, non-victimising aspects of refugee identity and experience. Keeping in mind that when it comes to stories about refugees “visibility and the commodification of suffering go hand in hand” (Edmondson 2012:15), participants were encouraged to abstain from traumatised biographies and to dare experiment with non-anticipated portraits that challenge the reductive assumption that refugees can only be seen and understood in the light of victimhood, loss and deprivation. In this light, each participant was asked to make a portrait of a person with a refugee experience with whom they were connected to a certain degree (e.g. friend, colleague, neighbor). An established level of intimacy was a requirement, in order to demonstrate how the representational angle drastically shifts, depending on the nature and depth of our relationship with our subjects. Eventually, the stories that participants laid on the table highlighted subtle and diverse shades of the refugee experience; they were intimate, humorous and moving, without being emotionally exploitative.

— Laura talked about her romantic affair with a Nigerian chemical engineer and their first, hilarious date; Marios brought in an emancipated Pakistani girl from his amateur theatre group, who dreams to air her own YouTube channel on beauty tips and reach a million subscribers; Tasos introduced us to his great-grandmother, a seasoned woman who came to Greece in 1922 as a refugee from Turkey; Alex shared a rather negative experience he had as an economic migrant in Sweden: a Syrian ‘bourgeoisie girl’ approached him – attracted by his European passport – with a view to marrying him and solving her paper issues; Nora chose to tell the story of a Syrian girl through the eyes of her cat, whom she secretly carried in a baby sleep sack across their journey to Greece... Stories as these subvert the anticipated portrayal of the imagined ‘other’. Refugees are no longer a distant, abstract or stereotyped amalgam of what we hear, read or watch; they are lovers, relatives, friends, people we admire, like or dislike. In this way, the stage challenges the ‘victimhood label’ as the only possible identity and can, hopefully, become a space for restored normalcy.

AN INVITING QUESTION, INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION — There are valid arguments that explain why a significant part of contemporary dramaturgies insist on placing their spotlight on the traumatic side of the refugee condition. Yet, as this article aimed to illustrate, our individual and collective perspectives are in dire need of a narrative that goes beyond binary concepts of victims

and abusers, 'others' and 'us'. Theatre has the ability – and it would be a pity not to make use of it – to establish a space for mutually enriching interaction and understanding. In this regard, I have shown how the representational ethics and respective modalities of ethnography can potentially inspire theatre – and documentary theatre in particular – to dig deeper and beyond valid but oversaturated stories of victimhood. They can help to highlight overlooked angles of the life and identity of persons of refugee background in a more nuanced and politically meaningful way.

— On this account, I do not conclude with a pre-outlined prescription for staging the refugee experience or a theory of 'dramatic ethics'. What I rather mean to achieve with this contribution is to draw attention to the ethical and political intricacies of refugee representation on stage, arguing that the way we construct a narrative is not only an aesthetically, but also socio-politically situated choice, and in this sense, "a site of moral responsibility" (Richardson 1990: 131). In making this claim, I follow Elliot G. Mishler in his argument that "it is clear that we do not find stories; we make stories. Personal narrative is not 'given' as a text; rather, personal narrative is a strategic practice of textualising and contextualising performance" (1995: 117). When the stories we make as theatre makers critically "encode (and perform) history" (Schechner 1985: 51) without resorting to hyper-aestheticized, oversimplified renderings of the refugee condition, then they will hopefully bring about compelling responses to Bharucha's challenging question: "When the play ends, what remains? When the play ends, what begins?" (2011: 366).

// References

- Bharucha, Rustom (2011): *Problematizing applied theatre: a search for alternative paradigms*. In: *Research in Drama Education*. Volume 16, Issue 3, pp. 366–384
- Butler, Judith (1997): *Excitable speech: A politics of the performative*. London and New York, Routledge
- Clifford, James (1983): *On Ethnographic Authority*. In: *Representations*. Volume 2, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 118–146
- Clifford, James / Marcus, George E. (1986): *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley, University of California Press
- Crapanzano, Vincent (2006): *The scene: Shadowing the real*. In: *Anthropological Theory*. Volume 6, Issue 4, Sage Publications, pp. 387–405
- Edmondson, Laura (2012): *Uganda Is Too Sexy: Reflections on Kony*. In: *TDR/The Drama Review*. Volume 56, Issue 3, pp. 10–17
- Ellis, Carolyn (2004): *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira Press
- Filewood, Alan (1987): *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada*. Toronto, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press
- Forsyth, Alison / Megson, Chris (ed.) (2009): *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
- Fragkou, Marissia (2018): *Strange Homelands: Encountering the Migrant on the Contemporary Greek Stage*. In: *Modern Drama*. Volume 61, Issue 3, pp. 301–327

- Garde, Ulrike / Meg, Mumford (2016): *Theatre of Real People: Diverse Encounters at Berlin's Hebbel am Ufer and Beyond*. UK, Bloomsbury
- Heddon, Deirdre (2008): *Autobiography and Performance*. Hampshire, UK, Palgrave, Macmillan
- Hume, L. and Mulcock, J., Eds., *Anthropologists in the Field: Cases in Participant Observation*. New York, Columbia University Press
- Jeffers, Alison (2012): *Refugees, Theatre and Crisis: Performing Global Identities*. UK, Palgrave, Macmillan
- Kokali, Ifigeneia (2011): From scapegoats to 'good' immigrants? Albanians' supposedly 'successful' integration to Greece. In: *Quaderni del Circolo Rosselli*. Firenze, pp.161–173
- Little, Suzanne (2011): In and Out of Tune with Reality: Opposed Strategies of Documentary Theatre. <http://www.doubledialogues.com/article/in-and-out-of-tune-with-reality-opposed-strategies-of-documentary-theatre/> (June 15, 2019)
- Little, Suzanne (2010): Re-Presenting the Traumatic Real: Douglas Wright's *Black Milk*. In: Alexandra Kolb (ed.), *Dance and Politics*. Bern, Peter Lang, pp. 233–254
- Meyers, Diana Tietjens (2016): *Victims' Stories and the Advancement of Human Rights*. Oxford, Oxford University Press
- Mishler, G. Elliot (1995): Models of Narrative Analysis: A Typology. In: *Journal of Narrative and Life History*. Volume 5, Issue 2, pp. 87–123
- Richardson, Laurel (1990): Narrative and Sociology. In: *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Volume 19, Issue 1, pp. 116–135
- Salverson, Julie (2001): Change on Whose Terms? Testimony and an Erotics of Injury. In: *Theater*. Volume 31, Issue 3, pp. 119–125
- Schechner, Richard (1985): *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press
- Soans, Robin (2008): Talking to Terrorists. In: Hammond, W. / Steward D. (ed.). *Verbatim, Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*. London, Oberon, pp. 15–44
- Spry, Tami (2011): *Body, Paper, Stage: Writing and Performing Autoethnography*. New York, Routledge
- Wilmer, Stephen E. (ed.) (2018): *Performing Statelessness in Europe*. London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan

// About the author

Martha Bouziouri is a documentary theatre maker, educator and social anthropologist. She is also a founding member of the production company PLAYS2PLACE. Her work on documentary theatre draws from the ethics and tools of ethnography, and reflects on the vigorous sociopolitical transformations and challenges across EuroMENA region. In 2018, she designed the innovative documentary workshop series *From Field to Stage: Dramaturgies of the Other*. Her projects have been presented in several major Greek and international theatre festivals and institutions. Martha Bouziouri is a member of Directors Lab Mediterranean (an initiative of Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab, N.Y.), Cultural Innovators Network, Tandem/Shaml - Cultural Managers Exchange Program and Robert Bosch Alumni Network.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// License

This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



ILJA LEONARD PFEIJFFER AS A LUXURY IMMIGRANT: A EUROPEAN PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL AND THE 'REFUGEE CRISIS'

„Het gaat er niet om of je als schrijver je voordeel kunt doen met betrokkenheid bij de maatschappij, maar dat de maatschappij haar voordeel kan doen met de betrokkenheid van schrijvers.“ [It is not about whether you as a writer can take advantage of your involvement with society, but whether society can take advantage of the involvement of writers.] (Pfeijffer 2016a)¹⁾

¹⁾ All translations are my own. I would like to thank Audrey McMahon for her help with translating the quotations and correcting the text. Also thanks to Christoph Rausch for his corrections.

— These are the words that the Dutch classicist, poet and writer Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer spoke after winning the E. du Perron prize in 2015. He had received the award of 2,500 EUR for a number of literary and journalistic texts in which he deals with the consequences of mass migration in the 21st century, or with what is currently often referred to as the 'refugee crisis' and its effects on Europe. In his acceptance speech the laureate reflected on the topic of mass migration as the greatest geopolitical development of today. Building on this Pfeijffer argues that dealing with such a major social issue demands a radical change of thinking, and in order to achieve such a change, society needs literature. He remains rather vague, however, about the actual literary strategies that are able to establish this change of thinking:

„[Literatuur] kan de meerduidigheid en de complexiteit laten zien van problemen die we tevergeefs trachten op te lossen met goedkope slogans. In een wereld waarin alleen maar wordt gesteggeld over aantallen, kan zij de verhalen vertellen en van de getallen weer mensen maken.“ [Literature can show the ambiguity and complexity of problems that we try in vain to solve with cheap slogans. In a world in which we are only quibbling over numbers, she can tell stories and turn numbers into people again.] (ibid)

— Throughout the speech Pfeijffer repeatedly emphasizes the ability and importance of literary works in revealing complexity. He also touches upon the thematic content of literature: juries of literary prizes do normally not judge so much *what* you say, but *how* you say it. Literary works, however, should also

be considered as valuable contributions to the public debate; we cannot reduce them to style and composition. In order to make his claim that society needs to listen to its writers, Pfeijffer proceeds to shift the focus from the literary work towards the literary writer: “Ik ben een geëngageerd schrijver die verdomme iets te zeggen heeft over de wereld waarin we leven” [I am a committed writer that has damn well got something to say about the world we live in] (ibid).

— Pfeijffer’s speech after receiving the E. du Perron prize contains all the ingredients that define his role as a *public intellectual*. According to Odile Heynders, professor of comparative literature, the public intellectual is someone who has “critical knowledge and ideas, stimulates discussion and offers alternative scenarios in regard to topics of political, social and ethical nature, thus addressing non-specialist audiences on matters of general concern” (2016: 3). In recent years, Pfeijffer has also presented himself as a literary public intellectual. He appears driven by a feeling of responsibility that is highly connected to his status as a *European* citizen and writer. “Ik besef terdege dat het een beetje uit de mode is”, says Pfeijffer, who migrated to Italy in 2008, “maar ik geloof hartstochtelijk in Europa, de Europese gedachte, de Europese Unie en ons dappere, logge, tergend moeizame proces van politieke eenwording” [I am well aware that it is a bit out of fashion, but I passionately believe in Europe, the European idea, the European Union and our brave, unwieldy, painfully difficult process of political unification] (Pfeijffer 2016a). In his acceptance speech he declares himself a *writer without boundaries*, a strategic effort to grant his authorial image an international grandeur.

— In this article I examine Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer’s role as a European public intellectual during the so-called ‘refugee crisis’. I will begin by briefly discussing Heynders work on the public intellectual, providing a theoretical framework for my analysis. Then, after offering some background information on Pfeijffer’s literary career, I conduct a close reading of *Brief aan Europa* [*Letter to Europe*] from the collection *Gelukzoekers* [*Fortune Seekers*] (2015). My analysis reveals the ways in which Pfeijffer is able to add complexity to the public debate about the ‘refugee crisis’. What are the means and literary tools with which a writer can do this? I also examine some of the more general difficulties of writing on the ‘refugee crisis’ today. Which difficulties arise when addressing this theme from a Western, privileged position?

LITERARY PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS — Heynders states in her book *Writers as Public Intellectuals* (2016) that the public intellectual traditionally is someone who “intervenes in the public debate and proclaims a controversial and committed and sometimes compromised stance from a sideline position” (2016: 3). Her hypothesis is that the present status the public intellectual has changed, because “strategies of celebrity behavior and the subsequent responses of the public are transforming the traditions and modes of intellectual thinking and writing” (2016: 2). The traditional sideline position, from which the intellectual in the past could present a rational, uncompromised standpoint, and from which he gained cultural authority according to literary sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, has transformed into a position from *within* the audience, says Heynders. Nowadays, the public plays an important – if not essential – role in either or not accepting the intellectual’s authority (ibid: 5).

— According to Heynders, literature is still a major drive of the public intellectual’s activity, while “literature is a lively and complex negotiation of text, author, reader and society” (ibid: 20). Her book therefore specifically zooms in on the *literary* intellectual, a person, mostly male, “with a certain artistic prestige and writing career, who tries to convince an audience beyond his main readers or followers, and in doing so deliberately uses various media platforms, styles and genres” (ibid: 7).²⁾ She points briefly at the fact that the female intellectual is “time and again neglected and even considered as non-existent”, a state of affairs for which she gives two explanations: “First, the gender bias in society has overlooked the activities and output of female intellectuals, focusing on the dominance of the male public lecturers, commentators and writers. Second, there seems to be a certain unwillingness of women to participate in the conversation about intellectuals, and to perform the role of the intellectual appearing in the media as a convinced, provocative and encouraging speaker” (ibid: 55). Rather than finding explanations and comparing female to male intellectual manifestations, she states we should focus on the distinctive performance of *any* public intellectual.

— Heynders is specifically interested in ways in which authors discuss ideas and opinions *in* and *beyond* their literary texts. On the one hand, the literary intellectual is someone who has *imaginative power* and who uses literary strategies and scenarios to discuss his ideas on societal issues. He has to have the ability to “read the world as a book, interpreting it and offering alternative scenarios for understanding it” (2016: 20). On the other hand,

2) In this article I will use the male pronoun when referring to either the public intellectual, the narrator or the reader.

the literary intellectual has to be a recognizable figure in the *public sphere*, who is able to address an audience beyond his main group of readers.

—— Heynders is also interested in the role of literary intellectuals' contribution to, what we might call, envisioning Europe and the European Union. In both the above-discussed monograph and her inaugural address *Voices of Europe: Literary Writers as Public Intellectuals* (2009), she discusses the various roles authors can play in the public debate: "What are the possibilities and perspectives in culture of increasing the awareness of Europe's roots, symbols and identities? Can we (re)construct a novelistic outlook on Europe and on the solidarity a democratic Europe requires?" (2009: 10). Today, a decade later, now that Europe has to rethink its identity as a result of the rise in migratory movements towards the European continent, Heynders's questions seem even more relevant than before. What role can literature and the literary writer play – as a public intellectual – in influencing people's thoughts and attitudes towards what is happening at Europe's borders? In a recent article on Pfeijffer's television documentary *Via Genua*, Heynders claims that "we need writers as Pfeijffer to rethink our position in regard to developing cities [in Europe]. We need them because they sharpen our views and touch our emotions" (2017a).³⁾ In what follows, I scrutinize this claim by looking into the ways in which Pfeijffer has contributed to the debate on the 'refugee crisis' *in* and *beyond* his literary works.

THE IMMIGRANT WRITER —— Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer was born in Rijswijk, The Netherlands, in 1968. He studied Classics at Leiden University and wrote a dissertation (1996) on the Greek poet Pindar. His literary poetry debut came out in 1998, *Van de vierkante man* [*Of the square man*]. Since then, Pfeijffer has published over forty titles, including poetry, novels, short stories, plays, essays, columns, translations and anthologies. He is well-known for his provocative life-style, both in looks and behavior. He is a tall, bohemian figure, with long hair and a red scarf as his trademarks.

—— In 2008 Pfeijffer moved from Leiden to Genoa, Italy, where he has lived and worked ever since. His major literary breakthrough came with his fifth novel *La Superba* (2013), for which he received the prestigious Dutch Libris Literary Prize. This novel is set in Genoa and explores different forms of migration. Pfeijffer's alter ego Leonardo contrasts his own fortunate position as a *luxury immigrant* to that of the poor migrant workers he meets in the streets of Genoa. Since 2013, this city and the theme of mass migration

³⁾ On literature and the 'refugee crisis'
see also: Heynders 2017b, Heynders 2018a

have been at the heart of Pfeijffer's oeuvre, for instance in the poetry collection *Idyllen* (2015), *Gelukzoekers* (2015), the semi-autobiographical *Brieven uit Genua* (2016) and in his columns for the Dutch newspaper *nrc.next*. In 2017, Pfeijffer was asked to make a three-part documentary for television, titled *Via Genua* (VPRO), in which he guides his viewers through the streets of Genoa, and talks with native inhabitants as well as with newcomers to the city about the topic of migration. In 2018, Pfeijffer's latest novel *Grand Hotel Europa* was hailed by the press and became an instant bestseller. Central to this novel is once again the European identity; it reflects on contested issues such as mass migration and mass tourism.

— Not only does Pfeijffer position himself explicitly as a European writer, his work also seems to appeal to an international readership. His novel *La Superba* (2013) has been translated into eight languages and *Grand Hotel Europa* (2018) is in the process of being translated into ten languages.⁴⁾

DEAR OLD MADAME EUROPE — My case study from *Gelukzoekers* is a literary text called *Brief aan Europa* [*Letter to Europe*]. This text in the form of a letter, written by an unnamed sender, is dated February 28, 2015 in Genoa (Pfeijffer, 2015: 7). In the following, I will refer to this sender as 'correspondent' to distinguish the fictional writer of the letter from the biographical writer Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer. The letter is addressed to a *Madame*, using the French word without further salutation (ibid: 7). This *Madame* is a personification of Europe and she is addressed in the polite form (using the Dutch *U* [you], which is similar to the German *Sie*). At first sight, this seems to be an indication of the respect the correspondent is paying her. Upon second thought, however, it appears to be only a rhetorical strategy, as *Madame* Europe appears not to be the intended reader of this letter. This becomes more explicit later on in the text, when the correspondent uses the possessive pronoun *our*, for instance in: "om niet gestoord te worden in onze dromen richten wij kunstmatige barrières op voor andere mensen" [in order not to be disturbed in our dreams, we set up artificial barriers against other people] (ibid: 14–15). This *our* does not only include the correspondent and *Madame* Europe, but indicates a much broader *we*. When looking at the title again – *Brief aan Europa* – I would argue that the letter only *suggests* to be directed at *Madame* Europe, but in fact it is (indirectly) addressed to all Europeans (using the name *Europe* as a metonym for all its inhabitants).

4) The Dutch Foundation for Literature provides an online database of translations: <https://letterenfonds.secure.force.com/vertalingendatabase/search> (June 19, 2019).

— This letter thus immediately raises questions about its supposed addressee. I have therefore chosen to analyze it here not as a letter, but as a literary text. Another argument supporting this decision is the resemblance of the text to the genre of Greek lyric poetry, in which a lyrical *I* often directs himself to a *you* (the so-called *apostrophe*), to whom he declares his love. *Madame Europe* is actually not having an epistolary conversation with the correspondent; she rather is the *subject* of his writings. In this sense, the letter is actually a monologue in disguise.

— The personification of Europe appears in the shape of an old woman who inhabits an apartment in Brussels. To her residents, *Madame Europe* is not of relevance anymore, the correspondent proclaims: “de wereld heeft u afgeschreven, beschouwt u als irrelevant, heeft u als een lieve, seniele oma in een schommelstoel gezet en opgesloten in een kamer op zolder, van alle gemakken voorzien” [the world has written you off, considers you irrelevant, has put you as a sweet, senile grandmother in a rocking chair and has locked you up in a room in the fully equipped attic] (ibid: 9). But contrary to this depiction, Europe certainly remembers her own history. The correspondent takes her back to what he assumes to be her first childhood memories. The narrative form in which he does so, is noteworthy:

„U herinnert zich, zoals u zich alles herinnert, dat u als meisje speelde op het strand van het land in Noord-Afrika waar u bent geboren. U had bloemen geplukt in de tuin van uw vader, koning Agenor, die een zoon was van Libya en de god van de zee. U hield van de zee. U houdt nog steeds van de zee.“ [You remember, as you remember everything, that as a girl you played on the beach of the country in North Africa where you were born. You had picked flowers in your father’s garden, king Agenor, who was a son of Libya and god of the sea. You loved the sea. You still love the sea.] (ibid: 7)

— Here the correspondent manifests himself as an *auctorial* narrator: he is in charge of the narrative and has insight into the thoughts and desires of his character *Madame Europe*. The memory he recounts, refers to the Greek mythological story of Europe, the Phoenician princess after whom the continent of Europe was named. Princess Europe was originally from North Africa, but was abducted by the Greek god Zeus. He transformed himself into a bull and persuaded the girl to climb on his back. After swimming

with her to the island of Crete, he exposed himself and sexually abused her. Nine months after being raped by Zeus, Europe gave birth to three sons. “Zo is het begonnen. Weet u dat nog?” [That is how it started. Do you remember?], the correspondent asks, after which he provides the confirmative answer himself: “Natuurlijk weet u dat nog. U weet alles nog” [Of course you remember. You remember everything] (ibid: 8). Note that the question he asks her is merely rhetorical. He has taken the freedom to speak *on her behalf*. In my opinion, the correspondent from the outset establishes a somewhat paternalistic attitude towards *Madame Europe*.

— The personification is the main figure of speech used in this letter and does seem to serve a number of goals. In the first place, it points at the origin of the continent of Europe. Referring to the classical myth of Europe, the correspondent makes one of his most important claims: “de geschiedenis van de mens is een verhaal van migratie” [the history of man is a story of migration] (ibid: 13). In a sense, we are all migrants, he implies. The correspondent draws a very explicit parallel between *Madame Europe* and the boat refugees of our time: they have fled the same continent, crossed the same sea, and faced similar dangers. History keeps repeating itself, he seems to suggest. In contrast to the young Phoenician princess, however, many of the African boat refugees do not make it to the other side of the Mediterranean Sea.

— The correspondent is not only pointing at the shared origin of Europeans and Africans, he is also claiming that our urge to travel can be a beneficial one:

„Onze nieuwsgierigheid naar de ander is het geheim van ons succes, zo niet van ons voortbestaan. U weet beter dan wie dan ook hoe belangrijk verplaatsen is, Europa, juist u. U hebt het vrije verkeer van mensen en goederen tot uw grootste project gemaakt, omdat u ziet hoeveel voordeel u dat oplevert.“ [Our curiosity for the other is the secret of our success, if not of our survival. You know better than anyone how important moving is, Europe, especially you. You have made the free movement of people and goods your biggest project, because you can see how much you can gain from it.] (ibid:14)

— Hinting at one of the basic tenets behind the European Union, which was founded to enable free mobility without borders, the correspondent points at the inequality by which this benefit is nowadays defined. If it is natural to all human beings to travel and

migrate, he reasons, why then would we raise barriers for certain people and not for others?

— What is interesting in Pfeijffer's text is that it also touches upon some of the underlying issues in the debate on mass migration, for instance the way in which we welcome different types of guests in Europe.⁵⁾ One of his main arguments is that Europe has sold her cultural heritage for economic reasons:

„U leeft van uw verleden. U verkoopt uw herinneringen. Miljoenen en miljoenen toeristen uit de nieuwe werelden van Azie en Amerika bezoeken uw boudoirs als een pretpark. De vergeelde foto's van uw glorie-dagen, uw jeugdig optimisme en uw verdriet, uw ontdekkingen en uw oorlogen in uw beduimelde albums worden gekoesterd en vermarkt als erfgoed.“ [You live from your past. You sell your memories. Millions and millions of tourists from the new worlds of Asia and America visit your boudoirs as an amusement park. The yellowed photos of your glory days, your youthful optimism and your sorrow, your discoveries and your wars in your well-thumbed albums are cherished and marketed as heritage.] (ibid: 8–9)

— In this fragment the correspondent paints a cynical portrait of the European tourism industry. Through the use of marketing terminology (*to sell, to market, to exploit*), he claims *Madame Europe* is driven by greed and opportunism. According to the correspondent, “herinneren is [haar] corebusiness” [remembering is her core business] (ibid: 8). Consequently, the type of guest that is welcomed in Europe is the tourist with purchasing power. The refugee, on the other hand, is expected to bring costs to the European economy and is therefore not welcome.⁶⁾ According to the correspondent, however, tourists are not behaving as proper guests. Rather, “[ze] staan [...] in de rij voor het Louvre, de Uffizi, de Vaticaanse Musea, om wat nog even van u is alvast te plunderen met hun blik en telefoons op selfiesticks” [they stand in line in front of the Louvre, the Uffizi, the Vatican Museum, already plundering what is momentarily still yours with their gaze and telephones on selfie sticks] (ibid: 9).⁷⁾

— Note that the negative image of Europe and its tourists is intensified through several connotations that the terminology he uses evokes: the *glory days* of *discoveries* and *wars* hint at Europe's colonial history. Further on in the text, the correspondent explicitly refers to the colonial era:

5) See, for instance, Gibson (2006).

6) Gibson (2006) discusses the lack of truth in this assumption, by pointing at the shadow economy that relies on illegal labor(ers).

7) Pfeijffer has pictured the same image in his novels *La Superba* and *Grand Hotel Europa*.

„U herinnert zich, zoals u zich alles herinnert, hoe u bent uitgevaren op machtige galjoenen, gedreven door de wind in uw zeilen, met honger naar onmetelijke rijkdommen in uw ogen, om het oosten, het westen en het zuiden te koloniseren en te plunderen. U hebt de zonen van Afrika geroofd, vervoerd in overvolle schepen en op een ander continent verkocht als slaven voor plantages.“ [You remember, as you remember everything, how you went out on mighty galleons, driven by the wind in your sails, with a hunger for immeasurable riches in your eyes, to colonize and plunder the east, west and south. You have robbed the sons of Africa, transported them in overcrowded ships and sold them on another continent as slaves for plantations.] (ibid: 12)

— Here he uses precisely the same terminology in regard to Europe’s colonial endeavors as to the tourists from Asia en America. The tables have turned, however, now it is *Madame Europe* who has to worry that her *riches* are being *plundered* by an *en masse invasion*:

„Het zijn er ontelbaren, duizend maal duizend maal meer dan de barbaren die Rome onder de voet hebben gelopen, en ze doen de oude, breekbare vloeren kraken onder hun massale invasie tot het te laat is om hen nog te stoppen. Het is al te laat. Maar ze betalen ervoor, dus het is goed.“ [They are uncountable, a thousand times a thousand times more than the barbarians who have trampled Rome, and they make the old, fragile floors creak under their en masse invasion until it is too late to stop them. It is already too late. But they pay for it, so it is okay.] (ibid: 9)

— In our era *Madame Europe* is overrun by tourists, just as the Roman Empire was taken by barbarians in the year 476. Interestingly enough, the image of the tourists that the correspondent sketches here, resembles the way in which refugees are often portrayed in popular news media. The tourists are described as an *en masse* group of *barbarians* and they are *uncountable* and *unstoppable*. The same terminology and imagery is used in regard to refugees, as various scholars have argued. Bleiker *et al.* (2013), for instance, have shown how refugees are often displayed in anonymous medium or large groups, which frames them “as a potential threat that sets in place mechanisms of security and

border control” (2013: 399). Others have pointed at the frequent use of *water* metaphors, portraying refugees as a *flood*, *stream* or *tidal wave*, all of which are unstoppable.⁸⁾ In its use of terms such as *invasion* the above Pfeiffer-quotation also repeats the war imagery that is dominant in written as well as visual representations of refugees. Scholars have argued that these different types of metaphors serve to dehumanize and de-individualize refugees.⁹⁾ I argue that Pfeiffer’s *Brief aan Europa* tries to critically expose these framing strategies, by applying them not to refugees, but to tourists.

— It seems that by personifying Europe, the correspondent is able to hold someone *personally* responsible and therefore to make an abstract discussion more concrete. Instead of addressing the (EU) government as an anonymous institution, he turns to *Madame* Europe as someone who can be held personally accountable for her actions. Moreover, the personification of Europe is combined with a meaningful metonym, that of the European Union as a house. *Madame* Europe has moved into a flat in Brussels, the political heart of the EU, but because of old age she is no longer able to leave her home. The correspondent depicts how she hides in her apartment: “U staat op van uw chaise longue, zet de televisie uit en strompelt op uw oude, stramme benen naar de ramen van uw Brusselse appartement om de luiken te sluiten. Als u de verschoppelingen niet ziet, houden ze misschien vanzelf op te bestaan” [You get up from your chaise lounge, turn off the television and stumble on your old, stiff legs to the windows of your Brussels’s apartment to close the shutters. If you do not see the outcasts, they may cease to exist] (ibid: 16). By using the image of the private home, the discussion on migration is transferred to a more personal and – consequently – ethical level.

— Cultural theorist Sarah Gibson has pointed at the different connotations that are connected to a number of dominant metonyms for the nation: “While the *house* has connotations of a private, personal hospitality, the *hotel* represents a public, commodified experience of hospitality subject to the logic of economic exchange. In contrast, the *fortress* signals defensive nationalism, with strong and secure borders, inhospitable rather than hospitable” (2006: 694). The terminology and imagery that is used in public debates to refer to the nation, thus also reveals one’s attitude towards incoming strangers. By using the metonym of the house, the correspondent is able to address *Madame* Europe on a specific level, namely the private and personal. Is *she* prepared to be hospitable to others? The old lady has chosen to close the shutters

8) For instance: El Refaie 2001, Van Gorp 2006.

9) On the framing of refugees see for instance: Santa Ana 1999, El Refaie 2001, Van Gorp 2006, Bleiker et al. 2013.

of her home and not let anyone in. The correspondent, in turn, can address her on this personal decision. He warns *Madame Europe* that her house is actually about to collapse; the tourists “make the old, fragile floors creak under their en masse invasion”. In order to survive, she has to be hospitable to the *right* kind of newcomers, not the greedy tourists.

— The letter therefore ends with a personal plea addressed to *Madame Europe*: “Zet uw ramen open, haal uw deur van het nachtslot en verwelkom hen. Haal hen binnen en omhels hen” [Open your windows, unlock your door and welcome them. Bring them inside and embrace them] (ibid: 17). The use of imperatives here is noteworthy, for it raises (again) questions about who is being addressed in this letter. These lines seem to function on multiple levels simultaneously: as a personal address to the character *Madame Europe*, as a more general plea to European citizens to offer hospitality to refugees, and maybe even as a solution for some of the economic and social problems the European Union has to deal with (for instance Europe’s aging population).

— In *Brief aan Europa* the attention is thus directed at *Madame Europe*, who the correspondent, in an accusatory form, holds personally accountable for the recent migratory movements. Yet this personification is problematic in several respects. The correspondent portrays her as a vulnerable and old woman, who is not able to take care of herself anymore: “Uw bleke, magere handen [...] kunnen geen aarde meer ploegen, geen graan meer dorsen en geen deeg meer kneden. U kunt zichzelf niet eens meer kleden” [Your pale, thin hands can no longer plough soil, thresh grain, or knead dough. You can’t even dress yourself anymore] (ibid: 12). He uses this metaphor of *aging* to point at the economic and cultural dependence of the European Union on foreign industries: “Uw japonnen, negligés, handtassen en boa’s komen uit China. Uw fantasieën worden in Hollywood gemaakt en uw telefoongesprekken gevoerd door iemand in India” [Your gowns, negligees, handbags, and boas come from China. Your fantasies are made in Hollywood, and your telephone conversations are handled by someone in India] (ibid: 17). *Madame Europe* is not able to perform manual work anymore and, moreover, she has no political voice, she has to obey her politicians. To them she is just “een lieve, seniele oma in een schommelstoel” [a sweet, senile grandmother in a rocking chair] (ibid: 9). This weakened and aged identity of *Madame Europe* is emphasized by the attitude of the correspondent towards her, which is sometimes patronizing and paternalistic.

— Problematic from a gender-critical perspective is, for instance, his declaration of love to *Madame Europe*: “Ik heb u innig lief en voor mij bent u nog net zo mooi als toen u een meisje met een mand vol bloemen op de rug van een stier de zee overstak en oog in oog met een adelaar vrouw werd, of mooier nog dan dat [...]” [I love you dearly and to me you are just as beautiful as when you crossed the sea with a basket full of flowers on the back of a bull, and when you face to face with an eagle became a woman, or even more beautiful than that] (ibid: 16–17). By singing her *physical* beauty, the correspondent expresses not only his love, but also his desire for *Madame Europe*, who becomes a fetishized object. An important as well as highly disputable detail in this respect is that the rape of Europe by Zeus is here euphemistically called *to become a woman*. This can be considered problematic because not only has he taken the right to speak on behalf of *Madame Europe*, he has also chosen to retell the story solely from his male perspective. He does not pay attention to the violent aspects of the strongly gendered and sexualized myth of Europe, which he is retelling. On the contrary, he suggests Europe’s eager sexual willingness towards Zeus: “U vond het machtig mooi. U slaakte kreetjes van opwinding, zoals meisjes van goede komaf dat in die lang vervlogen tijden plachten te doen” [You thought it was powerfully beautiful. You let out cries of excitement, as upper-class girls were wont to do in those long gone days] (ibid: 7).

— This final episode of the letter is also questionable from a postcolonial perspective, for it portrays the African migrants in a stereotypical way. Europe’s salvation comes from masculinized helpers, migrants who look like *bulls*: “Zie hoe breed hun zwarte ruggen zijn en hoe sterk hun zwarte spieren” [See how broad their black backs are and how strong their black muscles] (ibid: 17). They are reduced to their physical features, namely their *broad, black backs* and the *strength* of their *black muscles*. Moreover, these migrants are compared to animals: “Ze lijken wel stieren. Zie de blik van hoop en vechtlust in hun ogen. Het is de blik van een adelaar. U moet niet bang voor hen zijn” [They seem like bulls. See the look of hope and fighting spirit in their eyes. It is the look of an eagle. You must not be afraid of them] (ibid: 17). Their image is one that is frightful: they have *fighting spirit* and look fearful. However, they also have *the look of an eagle*, which, upon first sight, seems to offer reassurance. This comparison refers again to the mythical story of Zeus, who transformed himself into a bull and abducted princess Europe to Crete. After a following transformation into an eagle, he raped and impregnated her. Therefore,

at second glance, the comparison of the migrants to an eagle cannot be considered positive, because it connects – indirectly – to a dominant image of migrants in nowadays news media: that of refugees as rapists. In my opinion, it is regrettable that in one of the few scenes in which migrants are active personas, they are reduced to highly problematic images. Moreover, the letter does not contain any more nuanced images of migrants to make up for this stereotyping.

THE GENOA-MYTH — These problematic images cannot only be ascribed to the unnamed correspondent, but also to the biographical author. The reader has received several signs that associate the correspondent with Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer. For instance, *Brief aan Europa* is dated 28th February 2015 in Genoa, which is Pfeijffer's hometown since 2008. The letter has also been published in Pfeijffer's semi-autobiography *Brieven uit Genua* (2016), in which he writes letters to his mother, his former lover, his publisher, his younger self and – thus – to *Madame Europe*. It is not my intention to directly link the correspondent to the biographical author, but rather to point at a specific effect the text has on the reader. Because Pfeijffer (in almost all of his literary works) raises a complex internal and external self-image, the reader starts wondering whether this is a fictional or autobiographical piece of writing.

— This does not apply to Pfeijffer's literary oeuvre alone, however. It becomes even more complex when we look at some of his extra-textual activities. On the 19th of February 2017, he was invited to *Jinek*, a well-known late-night talk show on Dutch public television to talk about his television documentary *Via Genua* that had just started broadcasting. Another guest to that evening's show was Secretary of State Klaas Dijkhoff who was at the time responsible for migration policy in The Netherlands. What is interesting about this interview is that Pfeijffer takes on the role of spokesperson for refugees. In debate with Dijkhoff, he is advocating a more humane migration policy and – implicitly – he claims to have insight into the actual needs of refugees:

„Ik wil wel iets zeggen over [die Turkije-deal]. Dat is misschien een deal die vanuit ons Europees perspectief heel goed gelukt is, en die heel gunstig is, omdat we het probleem onzichtbaar hebben gemaakt. Maar vanuit het perspectief van die vluchtelingen hebben we het alleen maar erger gemaakt. Er is echt niemand geholpen met die Turkije-deal.” [I do want to say something about the Turkey

deal. It is a deal that, from our European perspective, might appear very successful, and that is very beneficial, because we have made the problem invisible. But from the perspective of those refugees, we have only made it worse. There is absolutely no one helped by the Turkey deal.]
(Jinek 2017)

10) On this specific interview see also: Bax (2019: 313-315).

— Here we see the writer in the role of the public intellectual who intervenes in the public debate, on topics that may safely be assumed to be beyond his professional expertise. Other guests at the talk show table also play a role in granting Pfeijffer this platform as an intellectual. In terms of Heynders: his authority is accepted by the public. He is, for instance, asked what *he* thinks the solution to the recent migratory movements is. Pfeijffer responds by saying: “Ik denk dat je minder beleidsmatig moet denken en meer menselijk. En ik denk dat je dus heel goed moet beseffen dat die stroom vluchtelingen nooit valt te stoppen. Ze zullen altijd komen” [I think one should think less in terms of policy and more humanely. And I think you therefore have to realize that the flow of refugees can never be stopped. They will always keep coming] (ibid).¹⁰⁾ Rather striking about his role as a spokesperson, however, is his distantiating use of *those* and *they* when referring to refugees. Pfeijffer keeps a safe distance – the intellectual’s traditional side-line position Heynders refers to (2016: 5) –, and seems to hold on to the refugee’s otherness.

— These statements are also interesting in that they can be considered an extension of the opinions expressed in Pfeijffer’s literary works. What is complicated about his intellectual position in relation to the ‘refugee crisis’, is that it also contributes to his popular media image, or – in terms of Jérôme Meizoz – to his *posture*. In his book *De literatuur draait door. De schrijver in het mediatijdperk* literary scholar Sander Bax has pointed at a fairly recent shift in Pfeijffer’s public image: in the last few years he has created a successful “Genoa-myth”, both in and outside his literary oeuvre (2019: 309). After the publication of his best-selling novel *La superba* in 2013, the author has become a literary celebrity, and part of his celebrity identity is his status as an immigrant living in Genoa. Pfeijffer keeps, for instance, emphasizing that his position as a “luxury immigrant” is somehow connected to the position of the migrants he writes about (*VPRO Boeken* 2016). Journalists have consecrated this myth, Bax says, by interviewing and portraying the writer in Genoa and by depicting the city as his natural decor. Moreover, this myth has proven to be a profit-

able media strategy. Dutch tourists have embarked on expensive, organized cultural trips to Genoa, during which Pfeijffer steps in as an actual tour guide. The Genoa- and refugee-myth thus seems to pay off. Not only financially, but also in terms of cultural authority: in recent years Pfeijffer's book sales have enormously increased and he has on a number of important literary awards.¹¹⁾

—— The profitability of telling refugee stories is a complex issue literary scholar Agnes Woolley has also discussed. She demonstrates, for instance, by looking at paratexts in a literary novel, how “editorial devices blur the boundary between the author's ethical aims of raising awareness of forced migration through fiction, and marketing strategies which appropriate these aims to sell the book. The singular, and often traumatic, nature of the refugee's story thus becomes the means by which the book is marketed” (2014: 183). The same mechanism seems to apply to Pfeijffer's texts: the reader starts wondering to what extent the author's occupation with these refugee stories is driven by a marketing strategy.

CONCLUSION —— Through his literary involvement with the ‘refugee crisis’, Pfeijffer positions himself explicitly as a European writer and intellectual. My analysis has shown this involvement to be both appreciative and critical towards Europe. On the one hand, Pfeijffer is passionate about Europe's achievements, heritage and liberties and he claims to be a fervent believer in the European idea. On the other hand, he critically appeals to our European conscience. In his *Brief aan Europa* he directs our attention to the European self-image. I have shown that through the use of literary techniques such as personification, focalization and identification, Pfeijffer prompts his Western readers to rethink their luxury position and puts forward issues such as mass tourism, border politics and the dehumanization of refugees. My analysis has also shown that writing on the ‘refugee crisis’ comes with difficulties that are hard (or maybe even impossible) to tackle. Some of the images Pfeijffer uses are rather problematic and result in stereotyping. Moreover, I have shown that the Western writer cannot simply disacknowledge his privileged position. Is he allowed to use the stories of refugees for his own benefit? Pfeijffer's recent economic success and cultural authority seem intricately connected to his position as a public intellectual writing on the ‘refugee crisis’.

—— The above discussed literary and public interventions have shown that by using literary imagination, by creating stories, and by adopting rhetorical strategies and performances, the writer can confront readers with “critical ideas and new perspectives”, like

11) For a more detailed analysis of Pfeijffer's marketing strategy, see: Bax 2019: 297–315. Worth mentioning is that the proceeds of *Gelukzoekers* are donated to a non-profit organization called *Werken zonder grenzen* [Working without borders].

Heynders has claimed (2016: ix). Pfeijffer is able to direct the attention of his readers to some of the underlying issues of the ‘refugee crisis’, such as the European history of migration, the dominant framing in popular discourse, and the ethics of hospitality. At the same time, we as readers need to be critical and vigilant towards literary interventions like these, for they can also be problematic mediations of the ‘refugee crisis’.

// References

- Bax, Sander (2019): *De literatuur draait door: De schrijver in het mediatijdperk*. Amsterdam, Prometheus
- Bleiker, Roland / Campbell, David / Hutchison, Emma / Nicholson, Xzarina (2013): The visual dehumanisation of refugees. In: *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 48, Issue 4, pp. 398–416
- El Refaie, Elisabeth (2001): Metaphors we discriminate by: Naturalized themes in Austrian newspaper articles about asylum seekers. In: *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. Vol. 5, Issue 3, pp. 352–371
- Gibson, Sarah (2006): Border Politics and Hospitable Spaces in Stephen Frears’s *Dirty Pretty Things*. In: *Third Text*. Vol. 20, Issue 6, pp. 693–701
- Heynders, Odile (2009): *Voices of Europe. Literary writers as public intellectuals*. Tilburg: Tilburg University. <https://pure.uvt.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/1162328/show.pdf> (April 9, 2019).
- Idem (2016): *Writers as Public Intellectuals: Literature, Celebrity, Democracy*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
- Idem (2017a): *Genova as scenario for the New Europe: How Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer illustrates superdiversity*. In: *Diggit Magazine*, April 3, 2017. <https://www.diggitmagazine.com/column/genova-scenario-new-europe-how-ilja-leonard-pfeijffer-illustrates-superdiversity> (April 9, 2019)
- Idem (2017b): *The Figure of the Migrant: Tommy Wieringa’s Intellectual Intervention*. In: *Werkwinkel. Journal of Low Countries and South African Studies*. Vol. 12, Issue 2, pp. 19–34
- Idem (2018): *Who speaks for the victim? Experiences of migrants and refugees in Jenny Erpenbeck’s novel Go, Went, Gone and Mikhail Shiskin’s Maidenhair*. In: Hoondert, Martin / Mutsaers, Paul / Arfman, William (ed.), *Cultural Practices of Victimhood*. London: Routledge, pp. 120–142
- Jinek (2017). *Schrijver Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer over de vluchtelingen crisis* (January 9, 2017). https://www.npostart.nl/schrijver-ilja-leonard-pfeijffer-over-de-vluchtelingen-crisis/19-01-2017/POMS_KN_7000276 (April 11, 2019)
- Pfeijffer, Ilja Leonard (2015): *Gelukzoekers*. Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers
- Idem (2016a): *We schreeuwen meer dan dat we luisteren. Daarom is literatuur noodzakelijker dan ooit*. In: *NRC Handelsblad*, April 25, 2016. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/04/25/weschreeuwen-meer-dan-dat-we-luisteren-daarom-is-literatuur-noodzakelijker-dan-ooit-a1466440> (April 7, 2019)
- Santa Anna, Otto (1999): ‘Like an Animal I was Treated’: Anti-Immigrant Metaphor in US Public Discourse. In: *Discourse and Society*. Vol. 10, Issue 2, pp. 191–224
- Van Gorp, Bladwin (2006): *Framing asiel. Indringers en slachtoffers in de pers*. Leuven, Acco
- VPRO Boeken (2016): *Interview met Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer*, May 22, 2016. <https://www.vpro.nl/boeken/programmas/boeken/2016/22-mei.html> (April 11, 2019)
- Woolley, Agnes (2014): *Contemporary Asylum Narratives. Representing Refugees in the Twenty-First Century*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan

// About the Author

Dr. Sarah Beeks is a lecturer in the field of Dutch Literature at Leiden University and at Amsterdam University of Applied Science. In 2013 she finished her PhD thesis on the social commitment of the Flemish writer Hugo Claus in the 1960s (*Alsof het woord geen actie is. Hugo Claus en het engagement in de jaren zestig*) at Antwerp University. Her research focuses on the position writers take within society, and their contribution to social, political, and ethical debates. Her current work concerns literary representations of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’.

// FKW is supported by the Mariann Steegmann Institute and the Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts Zurich University of the Arts

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// License

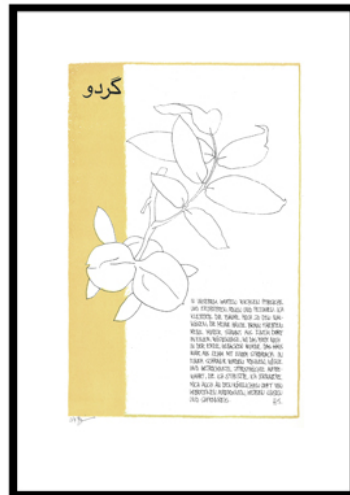
This work is licensed under the CC-BY-ND License 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>



GREENER PASTURES (2015–2019) HANNIMARI JOKINEN EDITION FÜR FWK NR. 66



Blatt 01



Blatt 02



Blatt 03



Blatt 04

// Hannimari Jokinen

GREENER PASTURES (2015–2019)

Blatt 01 Gole Yakh, Blatt 02 Gerdu, Blatt 03 Efo Tete, Blatt 04 Al-Asr

Siebdruck auf Echtbüttenkarton

je 390 x 530 mm, Auflage: 7 Stück pro Motiv, handsigniert

je Blatt 180,- Euro (ohne Rahmen)

die Serie mit vier Bildern 650,- Euro (ohne Rahmen)

zzgl. Versandkosten, inkl. ein Katalog der Ausstellung *ort_m* [migration memory],

in dem die Greener Pastures-Installation dokumentiert ist

Bestellmailadresse: art@freedom-roads.de

<http://kupla.de/gedition.htm>

HANNIMARI JOKINEN, *GREENER PASTURES*, 2015–2019

Die vier Siebdrucke *Greener Pastures* von Hannimari Jokinen, der 53. künstlerischen Edition von *FKW*¹⁾, zeigen je eine Pflanze: *Gole Yakh* ist der persische Name für die *Winterblüte*; *Gerdu* ist die persische Bezeichnung für die *Echte Walnuss*; *Efo Tete* wird eine nigerianische Art von Spinat genannt und *Al-Asra* ist arabisch und bedeutet ‚zwischen vier und fünf Uhr‘, die Zeit, in der diese so benannte *Wunderblume* ihre Blüten öffnet. Jedes Motiv ist in schwarzen Linien auf naturweißen Untergrund gesetzt und wird gerahmt von ocrafarbenen Balken. Wie in einem botanischen Buch ist den einzelnen Graphiken je ein Text an die Seite gestellt, aber anders als in Pflanzenkompendien liest man hier einen Ausschnitt aus einer Erzählung von einer vergangenen Zeit: eine Erinnerung an einen Garten und an Pflanzen aus der Kindheit.

— Hervorgegangen ist diese Edition aus einem Projekt im Jahr 2015, im sogenannten *Summer of Welcome*, das Jokinen gemeinsam mit sechs Frauen durchführte, die aus verschiedenen Ländern (Iran, Nigeria, Syrien) nach Hamburg, Deutschland, geflüchtet sind: Christina B., Fatemeh H. S., Ferial Akel Bou H., Ghosoun A., Heide S. und Summer S. Die Künstlerin bat die Frauen, ihr ‚ihre Geschichten‘ zu erzählen. Mit einer speziellen Interviewtechnik, die sie bereits im Kontext anderer Projekte²⁾ entwickelt hatte, kamen die Frauen ins Gespräch. Damit wurde – wie Jokinen es beschreibt – „eine Annäherung trotz kultureller und zuweilen auch sprachlicher Barrieren“ möglich (2016: 93). Aus den Interviews hat Jokinen jeweils einen Text zusammengestellt und mit ihren Gesprächspartnerinnen abgestimmt.³⁾ Die Frauen erzählen von ihrer Kindheit und Jugend, ihrem Leben in den jeweiligen Herkunftsländern, von Umzügen und Migrationen, ihrer Flucht nach Europa und ihrer Situation in Deutschland. In allen Erzählungen spielen Gerüche und Geschmack sowie zusammenhängend damit Gärten und Landschaften, aber auch gemeinsames Essen eine besondere Rolle. Für die Präsentation dieser Erzählungen, z.B. in der von Jokinen kuratierten Ausstellung *ort_m [migration memory]*,⁴⁾ entschied sie, zu jeder Geschichte eine der genannten Pflanzen zu zeichnen. Zusätzlich erstellte sie von jeder Frau ein fotografisches Schwarz-Weiß-Porträt, das sie vor einem Maisfeld aufnahm. Die Texte wurden dann mit den Zeichnungen, den Fotografien und einem Ensemble von Cassava-Setzlingen als Installation inszeniert.⁵⁾ Mais und Cassava (auch als Maniok bekannt) sind zwei

1) Für eine Präsentation der Edition s. auch <http://kupla.de/gedition.htm>.

2) Unter anderem für die Installation *Sehnsuchtsformeln* (2003 mit Migrant*innen in Hamburg), *Ayigya Voices* (2011 mit Frauen in Ghana) und in filmischen Porträts mit in Deutschland lebenden Menschen afrikanischer Herkunft für die Wanderausstellung *freedom roads!* (2010–2014).

3) Publiziert sind die Texte und Bilder im Katalog *ort_m [migration memory]* (2016) und auf: <http://www.kupla.de/greener.htm>

4) Für weitere Informationen zu dem Projekt und der Ausstellung, s. <http://www.ort-m.de/welcome.html>.

5) 2016 wurde *Greener Pastures* auf dem *altonale Festival* in Hamburg ausgestellt und mit dem *altonale Kunstpreis* ausgezeichnet, s. dazu <http://www.kupla.de/kuplaalt.htm>

Pflanzen, die sich im Zusammenhang mit der Kolonialisierung von Lateinamerika aus global verbreiteten (ebd.). So wurde über das Motiv von Pflanzen sowohl auf die individuelle Erinnerung und Erfahrung der Frauen als auch auf die fortdauernden kolonialen Verhältnisse verwiesen, die die Welt bis heute prägen und für viele Migrationsbewegungen verantwortlich sind.

— Die Auszüge aus den persönlichen Erzählungen, die auf den als Edition für *FKW* erstellten Siebdrucken zu lesen sind, setzen den Fokus noch mal stärker auf Gerüche und Erinnerungsbilder aus der Kindheit. Ebenso wie das gesamte Projekt *Greener Pastures* entsprechen sie damit so gar nicht der dominanten Ikonographie von Flucht und Migration, wie sie sich aktuell weiter etabliert. Bilder von übervollen Booten auf dem Mittelmeer; große Menschengruppen, die durch unwegsames Gelände laufen oder an Grenzzäunen stehen, sind aus diversen Medien überaus bekannt und produzieren das Bild von anonymen ‚Strömen‘ und ‚bedrohlichen Wellen‘ von Geflüchteten. Vereinzelt werden mittlerweile auch individuelle Geschichten herausgegriffen. Über persönliche Schicksale wird versucht, denjenigen, die nach Europa geflüchtet sind, ein individuelles Bild zu geben. Dabei sind es vorwiegend junge Männer, die im Kontext von Fernsehberichten, Dokumentationen, Filmen usw. die Möglichkeit erhalten, von ihrer Flucht und den Situationen im europäischen Ankunftsland zu berichten. Nicht selten drohen diese für die Erzählenden sicherlich dramatischen Erlebnisse für die europäischen Zuschauer*innen wie Road Movies inszeniert und spektakularisiert zu werden. Weder die individuellen Erfahrungen noch die politischen Hintergründe und Verantwortlichkeiten der Staaten des Globalen Nordens werden dabei ausführlich erläutert. Meist erscheinen die Geflüchteten so als die absolut ‚Anderen‘, von deren Leben vor der Flucht und ihren Herkunftsländern die meisten Europäer*innen nichts wissen. Frauen, die geflüchtet sind, bleiben dabei fast gänzlich unsicht- und unhörbar. Wenn überhaupt werden sie in den tradierten europäischen Darstellungsparametern einer Pietà oder einer marienähnlichen Mutterdarstellung gezeigt. Aber selbst diese Geschlechterrollen tradierenden Bilder von Frauen scheinen in den letzten Jahren durch solche von beherzten, heterosexuellen Vätern auf der Flucht ersetzt zu werden. Gemeinhin entsteht so der Eindruck, dass Flucht ein männliches Phänomen sei und dass es Männer sind, die Migrationsbewegungen initiieren und anführen. Dabei verweisen differenzierte Studien der Migrationsforschung darauf, dass seit Jahrzehnten die Hälfte aller Geflüchteten weiblich sind (Neuhauser/Hess/Schwenken 2017: 184).

— Hannimari Jokinen hat das Projekt *Greener Pastures* initiiert, weil sie sich für die Geschichten von geflüchteten Frauen interessiert. Dabei hebt sie nicht an, für die Frauen zu sprechen oder zu behaupten, die Frauen würden nicht selbst sprechen können. Vielmehr ging es ihr darum, gemeinsam mit den Frauen eine Vorgehensweise zu entwickeln, mit künstlerischen und erzählerischen Mitteln ihre spezifischen Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen zu vermitteln. Den oben erwähnten spektakulären Inszenierungen von Flucht setzt *Greener Pastures* eine Darstellungs- und Erzählform entgegen, die Erinnerungen aus der Kindheit bis zur heutigen Situation umfasst. Damit reduziert sie die Frauen nicht nur auf ihre Fluchterfahrung, sondern verweist auch auf deren Lebensrealitäten, womit die Schmerzlichkeit der Erlebnisse von Krieg und Flucht noch mal stärker deutlich werden. Auf den einzelnen Blättern, die die 53. Edition von *FKW* bilden, sind folgende Auszüge aus den Geschichten der Frauen zu lesen:

— Blatt 01 **Gole Yakh** (Winterblüte, *Chimonanthus praecox*)

Fatemeh H. S., aus dem Iran:

„ ... *Wir wohnten in einem geräumigen Haus mit einem großen Garten. Es war ein Paradies. Ich kann mich an Kräuter erinnern, an Aubergine und Zucchini, Granatäpfel und Khaki, den betörenden Rosen- und Jasminduft. Aus Weintrauben machten wir Essig und Sirup. Meine Lieblingspflanze ist gole yakh, die Winterblüte. Unsere Mutter schob den kniehohen Schnee beiseite und zeigte uns darunter die zarten gelben Eisblumen ...*“

— Blatt 02 **Gerdu** (Echte Walnuss, *Juglans regia*)

Heide S. aus dem Iran:

„ ... *In unserem Garten wuchsen Pfirsiche und Erdbeeren, Rosen und Petunien. Ich kletterte die Bäume hoch zu den Walnüssen, die meine Hände braun färbten. Meine Mutter stammt aus einem Dorf in einer Wüstenoase, wo das Brot noch in der Erde gebacken wurde. Das Haus war aus Lehm mit einem Strohdach. In einem Schrank wurden Rosinen, Nüsse und getrocknete Zitrusfrüchte aufbewahrt, die ich stibitzte. Ich erinnere mich auch an den köstlichen Duft von gebratenen Auberginen, gelben Linsen und Safranreis ...*“

— Blatt 03 **Efo Tete** (Fuchsschwanz, *Amaranthus hybridus*)

Christina B. aus Nigeria:

„ ... *When I was nine, we had a garden plot where mango and banana, pineapple and tangerine, papaya and cashew nut*

grew. I like the green vegetable efo tete, a kind of spinach with an intense colour. There was a small mud house, too, and we used to invite friends to our table. My aunts owned a farmhouse with fields of coconut, coffee, sugar cane, yam, and kola nut. They cooked traditional okra soup with beef, fish, palmoil, and dawadawa ...“

— Blatt 04 **Al-Asr** (Wunderblume, *Mirabilis jalapa*)

Ghosoun A., aus Syrien:

„ ... An einer Verzweigung führte eine berühmte Brücke über den Fluss. Als Kind spielte ich so oft ich konnte am Wasser, und ich liebte es, auf der Brücke zu flanieren. Mich begleitet noch der süße Duft der Blüten des Algarb-Baumes. Meine Mutter pflegte unseren schönen Garten, die Dattelpalmen und die Weinstöcke. Ich erinnere mich an eine lila-gelbe Blume, die sich nachmittags nur ganz kurz öffnet. Ihr arabischer Name al-asr bedeutet ‚zwischen vier und fünf Uhr‘ ...“

— Dass die Erinnerungen an die eigene Kindheit und Jugend mit Gerüchen und Düften verknüpft sind, die wiederum mit Pflanzen, Landschaften und Essen zusammenhängen, ist vermutlich weder historisch noch kulturell spezifisch, sondern entspricht der Erfahrung von vielen Menschen. Dass die Mehrzahl der so ins Gedächtnis gerufenen Orte und Situationen als farbtintensiv, paradiesisch und voll mit neu zu Entdeckendem imaginiert werden, ist wahrscheinlich ähnlich universell. Weit verbreitet ist wohl auch, dass Gärten eher weiblich konnotiert sind und Gartenarbeit in vielen Kulturen von Frauen* ausgeführt sowie das Wissen darüber unter Frauen* weitergegeben wird. Pflanzenzucht gilt daher vielerorts als reproduktive und wenig spektakuläre Tätigkeit, nur hin und wieder wird sie als *Mode neu* entdeckt und der eigene Garten als Sehnsuchtsort inszeniert. *Greener Pastures* hat nichts mit diesen modischen Sehnsüchten zu tun, sondern ruft vielmehr gemeinsame Erinnerungserfahrungen auf. Die von Jokinen gezeichneten Pflanzen erscheinen irgendwie zart und kräftig wachsend zugleich. Sie verweisen auf die Ungewissheit des Gärtnerns und der Pflanzenzucht, auf die Sorge und die Hoffnung, dass die Pflanze wächst, gedeiht und Jahreszeiten sowie verschiedene Wetterlagen überlebt. Die Erinnerungen der Frauen lassen die memorierten Lebenssituationen zunächst ähnlich schön wie die Pflanzen, dann aber auch vergleichbar unsicher und prekär erscheinen. Das Leben, das sie im Nachhinein als paradiesisches erinnern, ist – das machen die Erzählungen überdeutlich – heute

vorbei, die Möglichkeiten, einen ähnlichen Zustand noch mal zu erreichen, scheinen in weite Ferne gerückt. Im weiteren Verlauf der Geschichten jeder einzelnen Frau sind die Flucht und die Ankunft in Europa geprägt von Vertreibung und Gewalt, von Aufenthalt in Gefängnissen und Lagern, von schlechtem Essen, von Unsicherheit und keiner bis geringer Aussicht auf ein ‚Zuhause‘. Alle flohen vor Kriegen, die ihre Lebensorte zerstörten. Aus dieser Perspektive erschien ihnen die Flucht nach Europa als einzige Möglichkeit, den von fast allen Frauen erwähnten Bomben zu entkommen. Der Titel *Greener Pastures* ist eine englische Redewendung und bedeutet, dass die ‚Weiden anderswo grüner‘ sind. Aber wo – so fragt man sich nach der Lektüre – sind die Weiden nun grüner? In Europa, wo, wie die Frauen berichten, teilweise Medizin und Aufnahme verweigert werden, wo es tagelang nur gekochte Kartoffeln und heißes Wasser oder ‚prison food‘ zu essen gibt, wo man auf winzigem Wohnraum und ohne eigene Küche lebt? Oder vielleicht dort, wo Menschen einen doch freundlich empfangen und Lebensmittel zur Verfügung stellen, wo gemeinsam gekocht wird, wie zumindest einige erzählen können? Vor dem Hintergrund der Erfahrungen lässt sich nicht behaupten, die Frauen wären lediglich nach Europa gekommen, weil ihnen hier die Weiden grüner erschienen. Überdeutlich wird: Es sind Krieg und Gewalt, die sie dazu gezwungen haben ihre Herkunftsländer zu verlassen. Und als wirklich *grüner* haben sich die Weiden hier in Europa längst nicht erwiesen. Es ist höchstens die Erinnerung an vergangene glückliche Tage, die sich als *greener pastures* bezeichnen lässt. So ist es den sieben Frauen gemeinsam gelungen mit dem Projekt *Greener Pastures* nicht nur Fluchterfahrungen aus der Perspektive von Frauen zu erzählen, sondern die Betrachtenden auch mit der Frage zu konfrontieren, welche Motivationen denen, die migrieren, eigentlich unterstellt werden und welche Leistungen – solche Fluchtrouten überhaupt durchzustehen und in den Ankunftsländern zu überleben – dabei übersehen werden.

// Literatur

Jokinen, Hannimari u.a. (2016): *Greener Pastures*. In: Dies. / Dieu-Thanh Hoang (Hg.), *Ausst.-Kat. ort_m [migration memory]*, Hamburg. Berlin, Revolver Publishing, S. 92–105
Neuhauser, Johann / Hess, Sabine / Schwenken, Helen (2017): *Unter- oder Überbelichtet: Die Kategorie Geschlecht in medialen und wissenschaftlichen Diskursen zu Flucht*. In: Sabine Hess u.a. (Hg.), *Der lange Sommer der Migration. Grenzregime III*. Berlin, Hamburg Assoziation A, S. 176–195

// Über die Künstlerin

lebt und arbeitet in Hamburg, bildende Künstlerin, Kuratorin, Mitglied im Arbeitskreis HAMBURG

POSTKOLONIAL, Projekte, Ausstellungen, Lehrtätigkeit, Forschung und Publikation zu den Themen Migration, Stadtraum und postkoloniale Erinnerung.

// Über die Autorin

lebt und arbeitet in Bremen, Kunstwissenschaftlerin, Mitglied der Redaktion *FKW // Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur*. Schwerpunkte in Forschung und Lehre: Kunst und visuelle Kultur des 20./21. Jahrhunderts, Gender und Postcolonial Studies, Migration, transkulturelle Darstellungen von Geschichte, Künstlermythenforschung. Stipendiatin, Mitarbeiterin, Lehrbeauftragte, Gastprofessorin an verschiedenen Universitäten und Kunsthochschulen.

// FKW wird gefördert durch das Mariann Steegmann Institut und das Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts der Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// Lizenz

Der Text ist lizenziert unter der CC-BY-NC-ND Lizenz 4.0 International. Der Lizenzvertrag ist abrufbar unter: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.de>



KHALED BARAKEH: DIE BLAUE STUNDE (16.11.18–13.01.19, MUSEUM FÜR KUNST UND GEWERBE HAMBURG)

Jüngst ging sie wieder durch die Presse, die Frage nach dem richtigen und dem falschen Umgang der Kunst mit dem Leid. Der österreichische Künstler Christoph Büchel präsentierte ein Schiffswrack, mit dem 2015 mehrere Hundert Flüchtlinge aus Afrika vor Lampedusa ertrunken sind, auf der Biennale von Venedig 2019 als Kunstwerk. Abgesehen davon, dass in der alten Schiffswerft des Arsenalen ein Wrack auf den ersten Blick nicht ohne weiteres als Werk erkennbar war, ging es in der Debatte vor allem um den Zeugnis- und den Kunstwert des Schiffes: Sensibilisiert das Schiffswrack für das Schicksal der Migranten oder setzt es ihr Leid dem Voyeurismus des Publikums aus? Und: Darf man einen – auch finanziellen – Mehrwert erzeugen mit einem Werk, dessen Bedeutung sich einzig aus seinem Reliquiencharakter speist, ohne die geringste künstlerische Transformation? Ist das Teilhabe, Aneignung oder schlicht Trittbrettfahrerei?

— Der syrische Künstler Khaled Barakeh hat 2013 für seine Arbeit *Regarding the Pain of Others* eine Totenbahre aus Syrien nach Jordanien schmuggeln lassen, von wo aus sie, in Einzelteile zerlegt, nach Deutschland verschifft und dort zu einem Kunstwerk wurde: Einige Teile hat Barakeh zu einem auf dem Rücken liegenden Thron zusammengesetzt und den Rest, säuberlich in Reih und Glied, als Fragmente auf dem Boden angeordnet. Bretter und rostige Nägel sind das Material, aus dem das Zeugnis des Leids wie die Insignie der Macht gemacht sind, mit dem Barakeh in einem symbolischen Akt den Toten ihre Würde zurückgibt. Der Titel der Arbeit zitiert die berühmte Schrift Susan Sontags (2003), in der sie das Spannungsfeld zwischen ebendieser Würde der Toten und dem Voyeurismus der Lebenden in der Kriegsfotografie auslotet – ein Titel, der wie eine unausgesprochene Frage über allen Arbeiten des 1976 in Damaskus geborenen Künstlers steht.

— Für seine Ausstellung, die im vergangenen Winter im Hamburger Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe zu sehen war, hat Barakeh hingegen einen poetischen Titel gewählt: „Die Blaue Stunde“ – das ist die Zeit vor Sonnenauf- und nach Sonnenuntergang, wenn die Welt in quecksilbriger Melancholie in einen Dämmer Schlaf versinkt. Der Titel steht in krassem Gegensatz zu den Inhalten, um die seine Auseinandersetzung kreist: Krieg, Exil, Folter und Flucht. „Die Blaue Stunde“ klingt fast sanft, sie



umschreibt Räume des Übergangs, ein Unterwegs, ein Dazwischen, zwischen Heimat und Fremde, zwischen Furcht und Hoffnung. Eine melancholische Betrachtung von Migration, die kein Zustand auf Zeit ist, sondern ein Durchgang – auf Dauer gestellt: Selbst diejenigen, die irgendwo ankommen und eine neue Heimat finden, tragen die Wanderungen zwischen den Welten weiterhin in sich. Der Titel, so scheint es, entrückt den Sachverhalt leidvoller Kriegserfahrungen und migrantischer Lebensbedingungen ins Poetische, und auch hier stellt sich die Frage, ob diese Entrückung eine Verharmlosung bedeutet oder eine Rezeption erst möglich macht.

Barakehs Arbeiten zeichnen sich durch eine Zurückhaltung aus, die nicht nur inhaltlicher, sondern auch formaler Natur ist. Er wählt eine strikt konzeptuelle und minimalistische künstlerische Sprache. Geradezu emblematisch sind zwei Serien zu den Opfern des syrischen Bürgerkrieges: *The Untitled Images* (2014) besteht aus gefundenen Fotografien verschiedener syrischer Kriegsschauplätze, die Menschen mit Toten in den Armen zeigen. Barakeh hat die leblosen Körper weggenommen, an ihrer Stelle sieht der Betrachter nur eine weiße Silhouette. Die wirkmächtige Bildformel der christlichen Pietà – der den Leichnam ihres Sohnes beweinenden Gottesmutter – ist durch diese Auslöschung auf den

Abb. 1: Khaled Barakeh, *The Untitled Images*, 2014

Punkt gebracht: Sie bleibt wirksam, da die Umrisse das Verstehen gewährleisten, verliert aber den Beigeschmack des Voyeuristischen und des Kitschigen, ist sie doch durch diese Auslöschung ein Stück weit ins Abstrakte überführt – und damit das Einzelne ein Stück weit ins Allgemeine. Die buchstäblichen Leerstellen bieten dem Betrachter Freiraum für Eigenes, ermöglichen es ihm, selbst eine Haltung zu entwickeln. Mit einem Wort: Die *Bildformel* tritt gegenüber dem *Bildinhalt* in den Vordergrund. In *Relentless Images* (2018) hat er Fotografien syrischer Folteropfer auf die Metadaten heruntergebrochen, die nichts mehr mit dem eigentlichen Bild zu tun haben, sondern rein technischer Natur sind: Dateiname, Datum, Dateityp und Größe – eine weitere Stufe der Abstraktion, die das Bild in seinen Rahmenbedingungen, und zwar denjenigen größtmöglicher Neutralität, nur noch indirekt aufruft.

— Mit diesen radikalen Reduktionen öffnet Barakeh nicht nur einen Freiraum für den Betrachtende. Er formuliert auch sein grundsätzliches Anliegen: nämlich die Frage nach dem Funktionieren *von* und nach unserem Umgang *mit* Bildern, nach der Darstellbarkeit von Leid, dem Voyeurismus der Massenmedien, der Unantastbarkeit menschlicher Würde, dem Recht am eigenen Bild – und damit, wie Erinnerung und Gedenken im Geflecht dieser vieldiskutierten und –kritisierten Aspekte überhaupt möglich sind. Diese moralischen, politischen und juristischen Dimensionen werden jedoch nicht *per se* verhandelt. Weder sichert sich Barakeh durch Diskurse ab, noch zieht er sich aufs Dokumentarische oder Biografische zurück. Im Gegenteil, er setzt sich dezidiert mit dem Werkbegriff auseinander und mit der Frage nach der künstlerischen Stellungnahme. Diese Fragen sind einem subtil geführten künstlerischen Dialog eingeschrieben, der sich, in der Folge von Minimal und Concept Art, mit der Repräsentationskritik auseinandersetzt.

— Minimal Art und Konzeptkunst der 1960er Jahre stellen eine reduzierte Formensprache bereit, die sich im weitesten Sinne gegen eine Überbetonung der Inhaltlichkeit von Kunstwerken richtete und letztlich als Bewegung gegen den Expressivitätskult gestischer Malerei der 1950er Jahre zu verstehen war. Diese gleichsam ernüchterte Formensprache steht bei Barakeh in deutlichem Gegensatz zu den hoch emotionalen Themen, die er aufgreift, und trägt entscheidend dazu bei, dass man sich als Betrachtende nicht moralisch mobilisiert fühlt. Sie greift selbst dort, wo er im Sinne



Abb. 2: Khaled Barakeh, *Relentless Images*, 2018

gestischer Expressivität Spuren des Leids inszeniert: *Damascus* (2013) zeigt Verletzungen eines Freundes nach einem Polizeiverhör in fünf übereinandergelegten schwarz-weißen Prints, die aussehen wie gestische Malerei. Mit dem Wissen um ihre Herkunft wandelt sich die Lesbarkeit als heroische Malergeste des Abstrakten Expressionismus in das erschütternde Zeugnis körperlichen Leids, in dem die ursprüngliche, existenzielle Codierung körperlicher Aktion in transformierter Form immer noch durchscheint. In ähnlicher Weise spielt die Arbeit *Tears on a Pillow* (2018) mit der Codierung gestischer Malerei, die tatsächlich aber von Tränen aufgelöste Make-Up-Spuren zeigt.

— Die strikte formale Zurücknahme schafft darüberhinaus auch Raum für Repräsentationskritik. Sie entzündet sich nicht nur an der Grundfrage der Darstellbarkeit menschlichen Leids und dem Voyeurismus der Medien, sondern auch an unterschwelligem Herrschafts- und Machtstrukturen, die sich unter anderem in Form kultureller Klischees verbreiten. So scheint Barakehs skeptischer Umgang mit Bildern seiner Herkunft aus dem islamischen Kulturkreis und der Tradition des Bildverbots geschuldet zu sein. Und in einigen ornamentalen Chiffren mag man orientalische Kalligraphie erkennen, doch auch das wird wohl eher durch das Wissen um die Herkunft des Künstlers nahe gelegt.

— Barakeh nimmt die Herausforderung dieser kulturellen Projektionen an und begegnet ihr mit spielerischem Ernst. *One Hour is Sixty Minutes and Vice Versa* (2009) zeigt eine Uhr mit hindu-arabischen Ziffern, die gemäß der Lesrichtung arabischer Schrift verkehrt herum läuft und im Spiegel – im Sinne ‚westlicher‘ Richtungsweisung – wieder ‚gerade‘ gerückt wird. Auch mit Arbeiten wie *Damascus* oder *Tears on a Pillow* dreht er die Erwartungshaltungen um, indem er westliche Codes mit anderen Inhalten füllt.

— Barakeh wahrt dabei auch den längst globalisierten, westlichen konzeptkünstlerischen Ansätzen gegenüber eine Distanz, in der man seinen Lehrer Simon Starling wieder erkennen kann. Sein Meisterstudium bei dem Briten bildete die letzte Station seiner Ausbildung, die Barakeh von der Kunsthochschule in Damaskus über die Funen Art Academy im dänischen Odense bis an die Frankfurter Städelschule führte und ihn mit den verschiedensten künstlerischen Auffassungen vertraut machte. Starling nutzt die Konzeptkunst zur Beleuchtung geradezu absurder Wirtschafts- und Warenkreisläufe und treibt ihr damit ein Stück weit ihre eigene Ernsthaftigkeit aus: Er macht sozusagen mit konzeptkünstlerischen Mitteln die konzeptuellen Schwächen von Systemen deutlich.

Im Zentrum von Barakehs Arbeiten wird ein Wille zur Selbstbehauptung spürbar, ein Wunsch nach Handlungsfähigkeit eines Künstlers, der mit dem Leid anderer kein Geschäft machen, sondern einen Raum für Gedenken öffnen möchte. Seine Freiräume trotz er dabei nicht nur den innerkünstlerischen Diskursen, sondern auch den eigenen, migrantischen Lebensbedingungen ab. Das eigene Ausgeliefertsein an politische Machtstrukturen reflektiert er in *I Haven't Slept for Centuries* (2018), einer bis zur Unkenntlichkeit verdichteten Überlagerung unzähliger Stempel bewilligter und abgelehnter Visa und Passierscheine aus dem Pass des Künstlers. Diesem zu einem Sinnbild geronnen Irrgarten bürokratischer Willkür setzt er mit *Self Portrait as a Power Structure* aus dem selben Jahr einen Akt radikaler Selbstermächtigung entgegen, der schon fast an Dokumentenfälschung grenzt: Nach den Visa seines Passes hat er die dazugehörigen Stempel nachbilden lassen, mitsamt aller Fehler des Originals – und zwar des originalen Druckbildes, nicht des Stempels selbst – aus dem jeweils landestypischen Holz. Mit dieser Geste bringt er das Verhältnis von Eigenem und Fremdem im Gewand kunsttheoretischer Diskurse von Original und Reproduktion, von Authentizität und Aneignung spielerisch auf den Punkt. Ernsthaft, aber nicht verkrampft, humorvoll, aber nicht lustig, würdevoll, aber nicht pathetisch – so ließe sich Barakehs Umgang mit Themen und Formen beschreiben, der sich in gleich bleibender Distanz zu ideologischer Vereinnahmung und kultureller Klischeebildung aus allen Richtungen hält und dennoch – natürlich, möchte man fast sagen – ihre Wurzeln in seinem künstlerischen und kulturellen Durchgang durch verschiedenste Formen der Repräsentation und Fragen nach dem Bild hat.



Abb. 3: Khaled Barakeh, *I Haven't Slept for Centuries*, 2018



Abb. 4: Khaled Barakeh, *Self Portrait as a Power Structure*, 2018

// Abbildungsnachweise

Abbildung 1: Khaled Barakeh, *The Untitled Images*, 2014, Digitalprint auf Papier, 21×30 cm

© Khaled Barakeh

Abbildung 2: Khaled Barakeh, *Relentless Images*, 2018, Tinte auf Papier, je 42×55,6 cm, Ausstellungsansicht *Aufheben*, Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt a.M., 2019 © Khaled Barakeh

Abbildung 3: Khaled Barakeh, *I Haven't Slept for Centuries*, 2018, Digitalprint auf Papier, 200×139,5 cm, Ausstellungsansicht *The Blue Hour*, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, 2018

© Khaled Barakeh

Abbildung 4: Khaled Barakeh, *Self Portrait as a Power Structure*, 2018, Holz- und Plastikstempel, versd. Größen, Ausstellungsansicht © Khaled Barakeh

// Literatur

Sontag, Susan (2003): Regarding the Pain of Others. New York, Picador 2003

// Homepage des Künstlers

<https://www.khaledbarakeh.com>

// Über die Autorin

Veronika Schöne ist freie Journalistin, Autorin und Dozentin, u.a. für die Freunde der Kunsthalle (Betreuung der Programmsparte Advanced) und für die Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg. Veröffentlichungen u.a. Simon Starling, in: Zusammenhänge herstellen, Ausst.-Kat. Kunstverein Hamburg 2002; Die Hände in Unschuld waschen. Zur Geschichte des Pontius Pilatus, in: Neue Rundschau 4/2003. Die Weißheit der Kunst, in: W. Ullrich, J. Vogel (Hrsg.): Weiß. Ein Grundkurs, Frankfurt/Main 2003. The End of the Sublime, in: Bernhard Prinz: Latifundia, Göttingen 2010; Bild – Ornament, Gesicht, Maske, Spiegel, in: Weißer Schimmel, Ausst.-Kat. Sammlung Falckenberg 2010. Dissertation „Zufall und Schöpfermythos in der Kunst nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg“ (erscheint vorauss. 2020).

// FKW wird gefördert durch das Mariann Steegmann Institut und das Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts der Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Koos / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// Lizenz

Der Text ist lizenziert unter der CC-BY-NC-ND Lizenz 4.0 International. Der Lizenzvertrag ist abrufbar unter: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.de>



REZENSION ZU: RASS, CHRISTOPH/ULZ, MELANIE (HG.) (2018): MIGRATION EIN BILD GEBEN. VISUELLE AUSHANDLUNGEN VON DIVERSITÄT. WIESBADEN, VS.

Visualisierungen von Migrationen in Fotografien und Grafiken, in künstlerischen Werken, auf Plakaten, in Zeitschriften, Print- und Online-Medien sind als „Reartikulationen von ‚Migration‘ [...] im Sinne einer gesellschaftlichen Konstruktionsleistung als konstitutive Teile des europäischen Migrationsregimes zu begreifen“ (Kuster 2007: 193). Wie aber wird Migration visuell konstruiert? Welchen Beitrag leisten diese Reartikulationen von Migration dazu, wie Migration verhandelt wird? Welche Stereotype werden dabei (re-)produziert und wie werden sie auch unterlaufen? Diesen und anderen Fragen widmet sich der 2018 erschienene Sammelband *Migration ein Bild geben – Visuelle Aushandlungen von Diversität*, herausgegeben von Christoph Rass, Professor für Neueste Geschichte und Historische Migrationsforschung an der Universität Osnabrück und Melanie Ulz, Professorin für Kunstgeschichte an der Universität Osnabrück.

— Die Herausgeber*innen knüpfen mit dem Sammelband an ihre eigenen (u.a. Berlinghoff/Rass/Ulz 2017; Rass/Ulz 2015) und weitere (u.a. Bischoff/Falk/Kafehsy 2010; Brandes 2011; Dogramaci 2013; Gutberlet/Helff 2011) Arbeiten im Feld der visuellen Migrationsforschung an. Sie widmen sich der Herausforderung „die Allgegenwart des Visuellen in Diskursen über Migration und Integration und damit die Produktion, die Verwendung und die Deutung von Bildern im *visuellen Zeitalter* theoretisch, methodisch und forschungspraktisch zu fassen“ (S. 1). Der Sammelband fokussiert auf das, was die Herausgeber*innen hinsichtlich Visualisierungen und gleichfalls das Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien (IMIS), an dem sie ansässig sind, beschäftigt: machtkritische Analysen „von Bildern, Bildproduktionen und Verwendungskontexten, von Akteuren, Rahmungen und Blickregimen“ (S. 2). Damit wollen sie Praxen der „Dekonstruktion akademisch, politisch oder kulturell geprägter Kategorien bzw. Zuschreibungen“ (S. 2) ermöglichen. Sie sehen dies „als Querschnittsaufgabe einer interdisziplinären Migrationsforschung“ (S. 2), für die sie sowohl kunstwissenschaftliche als auch historische Debatten zusammenbringen. Dabei verweisen die Herausgeber*innen auf die Arbeit von Sigrid Schade und Silke Wenk (2011), die die behauptete para-

digmatische Heraufbeschwörung einer neuartigen Bildermacht und -flut problematisieren. Gleichfalls würdigen sie die 2011 erschienene 51. FKW-Ausgabe *Visuelle Migrationen*, in der Kerstin Brandes (2011: 6), die immer noch aktuelle Kritik einer „(Re-) Ontologisierung des Bildes“ skizziert und die Relevanzen von Intertextualität, Bedeutungswandel, Machtverhältnissen sowie die Distribution von Bildern in unterschiedlichen Zeiten und Medien hervorhebt.

— Die Verknüpfung verschiedener Disziplinen im Themenfeld der Migrationsforschung erscheint (nicht nur) vor dem Hintergrund folgerichtig, dass Migration insbesondere in Deutschland und Europa als etwas vermeintlich Exzeptionelles problematisiert und nicht nur sprachlich mit Naturkatastrophen, wie ‚Flüchtlingswelle‘ oder ‚Flüchtlingsstrom‘ verknüpft wird. Während in der Kunstgeschichte und mit dem Konzept der *Visuellen Kultur* weit mehr in den Blick gerückt wurde als „klassische Bildgattungen der Hochkultur“ (S. 424), lässt sich nach den Herausgeber*innen in der Geschichtswissenschaft, wo Bilder häufig lediglich der Illustration dienen, ein Zögern konstatieren. Sie plädieren daher dafür den repräsentationskritischen, kunsthistorischen Ansatz mit der geschichtswissenschaftlichen Analyse von Akteur*innen der Bildproduktion und ihren historischen Bedingungen zusammenzudenken, um „zu einer Betrachtung von Bildmaterial als Quelle für die Inszenierung von Wirklichkeit durch Bildproduktion und die Konstruktion von Geschichte durch Bildverwendung“ (S. 424) zu kommen. Dieser Schritt ist nicht nur durch eine bloße zwischendisziplinäre Annäherung zu erreichen, sondern bedarf, wie die Herausgeber*innen unterstreichen, des interdisziplinären Dialogs. Hierfür versammeln sie Beiträge aus den Erziehungs-, Medien- und Kulturwissenschaften, der Soziologie, der Kommunikations- und Rechtswissenschaften sowie der historischen und kunsthistorischen Migrationsforschung. Die thematische Breite des Sammelbandes umfasst Fotografien, Praktiken, Inszenierungen, Schulbücher, massenmediale Darstellungen, Emblemata und (Werbe-)Kampagnen „vom populärkulturellen und bisweilen subversiven Harraga bis zum ‚Schlüsselbild‘ der deutschen Migrationsgeschichte“ (S. 3). Dabei lassen sich vier thematische Schwerpunkte des Sammelbandes identifizieren, die durch die Einleitung und einen abschließenden Aufsatz von Christoph Rass und Melanie Ulz gerahmt werden:

1) Visuelle Konstruktionen von Migrationen in Kunst und Kultur (Beiträge von Burcu Dogramaci, Maria Oikonomou, Natalie Bayer),

- 2) Visualisierungen von Migrationen in Bildungskontexten (Beiträge von Stephan Scholz, Patricia Stošić, Alexandra Budke und Andreas Hoogen, Hans-Joachim Roth),
- 3) Produktion und Wechselwirkungen von (medialen) visuellen Repräsentationen von Migrant*innen und Migrationen (Beiträge von Betty de Hart und Marga Altena, Ewelina Chwiejda, Katrin Hunsicker, Heidrun Friese, Inken Sürig) und
- 4) Visualisierungen von Migrationen in der Schweiz mit Fokus auf den seit den 1970er Jahren bestehenden ‚Überfremdungs‘-Diskurs (Beiträge von Jeannine Wintzer und Sophie Hirsig, Christelle Maire, Claudio Scarvaglieri).

— Für eine sozialkonstruktivistische Geschlechterforschung ist der Sammelband und das Verständnis der Herausgeber*innen von visueller Migrationsforschung in hohem Maße anschlussfähig. So zeigt der Beitrag von Katrin Hunsicker, dass in den von 2000 bis 2005 erschienenen Artikeln des Magazins *Der Spiegel* historisch weit zurückreichende vergeschlechtlichte rassistische Imaginationen reaktualisiert wurden, um die massiven Einschränkungen des am 01.01.2005 in Kraft getretenen deutschen Zuwanderungsgesetzes zu legitimieren. Die schon in den 1990er Jahren zirkulierende Beschreibung von Asylbewerbern aus afrikanischen Ländern als ‚Asylbetrüger‘ wird nun mit visuellen Bedrohungsinszenierungen verknüpft, in denen Schwarze männliche ‚Fremdkörper‘ in eine als weiblich konnotierte weiße Nation eindringen. Dass die Vorstellung einer deutschen Volk Nation maßgebend für dominante Perspektiven auf Migration ist, zeigt auch der Beitrag von Stefan Scholz. Er legt dar, dass in deutschen Schulbüchern für den Geschichtsunterricht in der Regel bis heute die Zwangsmigration von Deutschen am Ende und nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg „als eine spezifisch deutsche Nachkriegserfahrung“ thematisiert wird (S. 95). Dabei wurden Fotografien der NS-Propaganda oder solche, die sich motivisch an diese anlehnen, häufig als Illustration ohne quellenkritische Angebote des Lesens eingesetzt und eine deutsche Opfergemeinschaft konstruiert, während die „visuelle[n] Bezüge zu anderen historischen oder aktuellen Migrationsphänomenen“ (S. 95) fehlen.

— Auch wenn ein Sammelband nur bedingt das weite und komplexe Themenfeld bzw. verschiedene Praxen benennen und analysieren kann, möchten wir dennoch auf Desiderate aufmerksam machen, die zukünftige Forschungsagenden stärker berücksichtigen sollten. So wäre es wünschenswert in einem interdisziplinären, wie dem hier besprochenen Sammelband, nicht nur weitere geschlechteranalytische Beiträge aufzunehmen,

sondern die immer wieder als selbstverständlich hergestellte Naturhaftigkeit von Geschlecht, Begehren und gesellschaftlicher Organisierung im Visuellen zu dekonstruieren. Eine kritische Reflexion der Persistenz heteronormativer, cis-binärer Rahmungen und Fokussierungen (nicht nur) in der Migrationsforschung kann sich, auch vor dem Hintergrund der Rezeption queer-theoretischer Perspektiven in den kunsthistorischen, kunst- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Debatten (u.a. Paul/Schaffer 2009) als produktiv für eine visuelle Migrationsforschung erweisen. Zudem wäre es sinnvoll in Analysen von Repräsentationen von Migrationen systematischer längere Zeitphasen in den Blick zu nehmen und historische Traditionslinien aufzuzeigen. Die Produktivität einer solchen Vorgehensweise macht der Beitrag von Alexandra Budke und Andreas Hoogen deutlich. In ihrer Untersuchung der Bilder(rezeption) zu Migrationen in Schulbüchern des Geographieunterrichts wird die Geschichte von Visualisierungen als Herrschaftsinstrumente thematisiert sowie die erneute, historisch schon in der Schweiz des Zweiten Weltkrieges verwendete Metapher des vollen Bootes. Eine andere Kontinuitätslinie benennt Burcu Dogramaci. Sie arbeitet die impliziten Verweise der Fotografien türkischer Arbeitsmigration nach West-Deutschland in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren von bekannten Fotograf*innen auf die Geschichte der Zwangsarbeiter*innen aus verschiedenen Ländern während des Nationalsozialismus heraus. Deren Unterkunftsbarracken wurden von ‚Gastarbeitern‘ der Nachkriegszeit weiter genutzt und auch auf den Bildern zu sehen gegeben. Solche Analysen werfen Fragen auf, inwieweit Repräsentationen seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges Kontinuitäten mit und Brüche zu Visualisierungen historisch weiter zurückliegender Arbeitsmigrationen in Deutschland und insbesondere der Zwangsmigration während des Nationalsozialismus aufweisen. Hierbei kann auf bereits vorhandene Forschung zur Bildproduktion der nationalsozialistischen Propaganda, zu Bildern in privaten Fotoalben oder auch zu den von Zwangsarbeiter*innen gemachten Fotografien zurückgegriffen werden (u.a. Pagenstecher 2009; Stefanski 2000; Vowinckel/Wildt 2015).

— Die im Sammelband analysierten historischen wie aktuellen Bilderproduktionen, insbesondere der Medien und staatlichen Apparate, aber auch der Mehrheitsbevölkerung, beziehen seltener analytische Perspektiven ein, die Verbindungen mit (post)kolonialen Blickregimen, mit der Reproduktion rassistischer, exotisierender Bilder über die ‚Fremden‘ in Kolonien, heute im *globalen Süden* aufzeigen. Neben der Lesart Katrin Hunsickers

gibt es auch Verweise auf vergangene koloniale Blickregime und Ausstellungspraxen in Natalie Bayers Analyse zum Migrationsdiskurs im Museum.

— Zur geopolitischen Fokussierung ist festzuhalten, dass sich die Beiträge des Sammelbandes vor allem auf Deutschland und die Schweiz beziehen. Weitere Beiträge richten ihren Fokus auf Italien, die Niederlande sowie das Mittelmeer als europäische Außengrenze. Aber Fragen danach, welche Praktiken geeignet sind, um gesellschaftliche Hierarchien zu erkennen und zu überwinden (S. 2), bedürfen sowohl eines erweiterten Blicks auf außereuropäische Regionen als auch des Einbezugs nicht-westlicher Wissensproduktionen und alternativer Wissenstraditionen. Diese finden bislang wie auch Migrationsbewegungen, Migrationspolitiken und soziale Bewegungen von Migrant*innen im globalen Süden nur wenig Berücksichtigung in westlichen Wissensproduktionen. Dabei ermöglicht etwa ein „border thinking“ (Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006) herauszuarbeiten, „how do people in the world deal with Western economic, political and epistemic expansion if they do not want to assimilate but choose to imagine a future that is their own invention and not the invention of the empires, hegemonic or subaltern?“ (Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006: 209) und kann letztlich auch darauf verweisen, welche Praktiken geeignet sind, um gesellschaftliche Hierarchien zu erkennen und zu überwinden (S. 2).

— Gleichwohl gilt es, den Beitrag der Publikation für die interdisziplinäre Migrationsforschung zu würdigen. Die Autor*innen liefern Argumente für einen kritischen Diskurs zu vergangenen sowie zu sich fortsetzenden Migrationspolitiken, die auch auf dem Feld des Visuellen geführt werden, und machen, wie Violetta Rudolf (2018) bereits betonte, „ein sehr überzeugendes Plädoyer für weiteren fächerübergreifenden Austausch in der visuellen Migrationswissenschaft“.

// Literatur

- Berlinghoff, Marcel / Rass, Christoph / Ulz, Melanie (Hg.) (2017): Die Szenographie der Migration. Geschichte – Praxis – Zukunft. IMIS-Beiträge 51/2017
- Bischoff, Christine / Falk, Francesca / Kafehsy, Sylvia (Hg.) (2010): Images of Illegalized Immigration. Towards a Critical Iconology of Politics. Bielefeld, transcript
- Brandes, Kerstin (2011): Visuelle Migrationen. Bild-Bewegungen zwischen Zeiten, Medien und Kulturen. In: FKW // Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur, Nr. 51, S. 5–11
- Dogramaci, Burcu (Hg.) (2013): Migration und künstlerische Produktion. Aktuelle Perspektiven. Bielefeld, transcript
- Gutberlet, Marie-Hélène / Helff, Sissy (Hg.) (2011): Die Kunst der Migration. Aktuelle Positionen zum europäisch-afrikanischen Diskurs. Material – Gestaltung – Kritik. Bielefeld, transcript
- Kuster, Brigitta (2007): Die Grenze filmen. In: Forschungsgruppe Transit Migration (Hg.), Turbulente Ränder. Neue Perspektiven auf Migration an den Grenzen Europas. Bielefeld, transcript, S. 187–202
- Mignolo, Walter D. / Tlostanova, Madina V. (2006): Theorizing from the Borders. Shifting to Geo- and Body-Politics of Knowledge. In: European Journal of Social Theory Jg. 9, H. 2

Paul, Barbara / Schaffer, Johanna (Hg.) (2009): Mehr(wert) queer – Queer Added (Value). Visuelle Kultur, Kunst und Gender-Politiken – Visual Culture, Art, and Gender Politics. Bielefeld, transcript
Pagenstecher, Cord (2009): Private Fotoalben als historische Quelle. In: Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe, Jg. 6, H. 3, URL: <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/3-2009/id=4629>, Druckausgabe: S. 449–463
Rass, Christoph / Ulz, Melanie (Hg.) (2015): Migration und Film. IMIS-Beiträge 46/2015
Rudolf, Violetta (2018): Rezension zu: Rass, Christoph / Ulz, Melanie (Hg.): Migration ein Bild geben. Visuelle Aushandlungen von Diversität. Wiesbaden 2018. In: H-Soz-Kult. <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-29739> (14.01.2019)
Schade, Sigrid / Wenk, Silke (2011): Studien zur visuellen Kultur. Einführung in ein transdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld. Bielefeld, transcript
Stefanski, Valentina Maria (2000): Zwangsarbeit in Leverkusen. Polnische Jugendliche im I.G. Farbenwerk. Osnabrück, Fibre
Vowinkel, Annette / Wildt, Michael (2015): Fotografie in Diktaturen. Politik und Alltag der Bilder. In: Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History, Online-Ausgabe, Jg., 12 H. 2, S. 197–209. URL: <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2015/id=5219> (14.01.2019)

// Über die Autorinnen

Katharina Hoffmann, Dr. ist eine unabhängige Wissenschaftlerin. Sie hat zur Geschichte der Zwangsarbeit in der NS Zeit promoviert und in verschiedenen Erinnerungsprojekten zur NS Diktatur gearbeitet. Zu ihrer akademischen Arbeit zählte u.a. eine Lehrtätigkeit in den Gender Studies der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg. Als Mitglied der Arbeitsgruppe „Migration, Gender Politics“ an dieser Universität hat sie internationale Konferenzen und Projekte durchgeführt. Sie war Gastwissenschaftlerin in Armenien, Bangladesch, Indien, Nepal, Sudan und Uganda. Schwerpunkt ihrer gegenwärtigen Lehr- und Forschungstätigkeit ist die Analyse kritischer Diskurse zu Geschlechtergerechtigkeit und sozialer Gerechtigkeit in Gesellschaften mit extremen Gewalterfahrungen.

Verena Hucke, M.A. ist wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am Fachgebiet Soziologie der Diversität unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Dimension Gender am Fachbereich Gesellschaftswissenschaften der Universität Kassel. Sie studierte Migrationsforschung, Gender Studies und Pädagogik an den Universitäten Osnabrück und Oldenburg. In ihrer Promotion forscht sie zur Aushandlung von Sexualität im Migrationsregime in Südafrika zwischen alltäglichen Grenzziehungen und subversiven Potentialen. Ihre Arbeits- und Forschungsschwerpunkte liegen in der Geschlechterforschung, kritischen Migrationsforschung, Queer Migration Studies/Sexuality and Migration Scholarship und Südafrika.

// FKW wird gefördert durch das Mariann Steegmann Institut und das Institute for Cultural Studies in the Arts der Zürcher Hochschule der Künste

Sigrid Adorf / Kerstin Brandes / Edith Futscher / Kathrin Heinz / Anja Herrmann / Marietta Kesting / Marianne Kooß / Mona Schieren / Kea Wienand / Anja Zimmermann // www.fkw-journal.de

// Lizenz

Der Text ist lizenziert unter der CC-BY-NC-ND Lizenz 4.0 International. Der Lizenzvertrag ist abrufbar unter: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode.de>

