

Conference programme

Travelling Narratives and Images in Times of Migration

October 20-21, The Norwegian University Centre in Paris

Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme,
190, Avenue de France, 75013 Paris

Salle 3

Thursday October 20

10:00-10:30: Welcome

10:30-11:30: Key-note speaker: Fabienne Dumont, École européenne supérieure d'art de Bretagne: **Migration through the Work of Nil Yalter: from East to West in the 1970s and 1980s**

11:30-12:00: Sigrun Åsebø, University of Bergen: **Travelling objects or migratory aesthetics? Differencing site and identity in the art of Marianne Heske**

12:00-13:30: Lunch

13:30-14:00: Rasha Chatta, SOAS: **Representations of Mediterranean Migrations in Graphic Novels and *Bandes Dessinées*: A Comparison of Zeina Abirached and Farid Boudjellal's works.**

14:00-14:30: Barbara Spadaro, University of Bristol: **Drawing Transcultural Spaces: Takoua Ben Mohamed's Graphic Narratives across Languages and Media**

14:30-15:00: Anje Müller Gjesdal, Norwegian School of Economics: **Travelling toponymy. Place names in Abdellah Taïa's *Une Mélancolie Arabe***

15:00-15:15: Short break

15:15-15:45: Bajro Muric, University of Regensburg: **Passing Down the Imagined Memories of War: Heritage Language Learning and Socialization Practices in Bosnian Muslim Immigrant Families in Germany**

15:45-16:15: Rachel Williams, Université Rennes 2: **Art and Contemporary Irish Emigrants: Aesthetics and Networks of Affect in David Monahan's "Leaving Dublin"**

16:15-16:45: Anna Burek, University of Ostrava (Czech Republic): **Auto-narration as a way of self-presentation. The stereotype of Polish migrants in Germany and the self-perception of Poles abroad in their auto-narrations.**

16:45-17:00: General discussion, closing remarks first day

Friday, October 21

10:00-11:30: Susan Ossman, University of California, Riverside and Olga Sezneva, University of Amsterdam and European University at St. Petersburg, Russia: **The Arts of Migration and Artworks That Travel Across the World**

Blanca Casas-Brullet, Alice Pienado: Performance

Discussion

11:30-12:00: Lora Sariaslan, University of Amsterdam: **"They are all Turks, but very very nice": Re-placing Contemporary Artists of Turkish Origin**

12:00-13:15: Lunch

13:15-13:45: Inge Lanslots, KU Leuven: *Identity Construction and Social Actors in Short (Documentary) Films on Immigration in Today's Italy*

13:45-14:15: Camilla Skalle, University of Bergen: **The Quest for Identity Through Bodily Pain**

14:15-14:30: Short break

14:30-15:00: Claudia Sbuttoni, Columbia University: **The Modern Mediterranean?: mobility in the contemporary Mediterranean and the migrant crises of the 21st century**

15:00-15:30: Håkon Tveit, University of Bergen

15:30-16:00: General discussion and closing of the conference

Organisers:

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Abstracts

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Auto-narration as a way of self-presentation. The stereotype of polish migrants in Germany and the self-perception of Poles abroad in their auto-narrations.

Poland as a country of Catholics, thieves and vodka – the main stereotypes are still alive in Germany and still to be copied by the following generations of the German society. Not much different is the picture of Polish migrants – they are still considered to be less educated, poor and looking for easy, not demanding jobs.

For almost two years I have been observing the ongoing dialogue between Germans and Poles – ones trying to believe that Poles are not what they are said to be, the others – trying to prove that Polish does not necessary mean worse. The process is not easy though. And as I realised during my research, it is not just one side of the trial to be blamed for it.

By giving the voice to the Poles in Berlin I was hoping to give them the chance to speak for themselves and willing to hear a strong voice of people who are aware of who they are, who know their value. Instead I have collected almost 100 auto-narrations of Polish migrants who are lost in the new country, not sure about their identity, who do not believe in themselves.

The auto-narrations are mostly focused on describing the past (life in Poland) and the current situation (life in Berlin), often built on the pattern of comparing those. Poles claim to be happy in the new environment but their auto-narrations say something else. The specific vocabulary, the non-verbal signs as well as the chronology of their auto-narrations uncover the truth they are not aware of or, for some reasons, they are trying to hide.

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‘Representations of Mediterranean Migrations in Graphic Novels and *Bandes Dessinées*: A Comparison of Zeina Abirached and Farid Boudjellal’s works.’

A consequence of the multifarious wars generated in the wake of what is commonly referred to as the Arab Spring has been the large-scale population movements from the Southern and Eastern shores to the Northern shores of the Mediterranean. The terrible images that we have been witnessing in the past five years brought the issue of migration to the forefront. The questions of scale and intensity aside, the Mediterranean has never ceased to be culturally and demographically the site of precisely such migratory movements.

This paper proposes to explore and analyse the representations of migration -and its correlatives such as war narratives and memory- in the work of two writers, Rachid Boudjellal and Zeina Abirached. Rachid Boudjellal’s three-volume *bande dessinée*, *Petit Polio* (1998-2002), has for its backdrop post-independence Algeria while following the protagonist’s father’s life as an immigrant in Toulon. In the more recent graphic novels by Zeina Abirached (published between 2006 and 2008), we trace memories of Beirut in Parisian everyday life and question how memory works in the migrant protagonist’s imaginary. By intertwining visual and textual

effects, the genres of the graphic novel and *bande dessinée* foreground the aesthetic impulse and modes of expression as modes of cultural production that are able to transmute the strictures of national imaginaries.

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Fabienne Dumont, European School of Fine Arts in Brittany (EESAB)

Migration through the Work of Nil Yalter: from East to West in the 1970s and 1980s

This conference will present different pieces made by Nil Yalter, a Franco Turkish artist who has been widely working with immigrants, showing their life and work's conditions in the 1970s and 1980s, mostly in France, but also in other European countries. We will enter in other pieces related to her interest in nomadic communities, without neglecting her feminist point of view.

Fabienne Dumont is an Art Historian, Art Critic and Professor at the European School of Fine Arts in Brittany (EESAB). She is the author of *Des sorcières comme les autres – Artistes et féministes dans la France des années 1970* (PUR, 2014), based on her PhD and the editor of the anthology *La rébellion du Deuxième Sexe – L'histoire de l'art au crible des théories anglo-américaines (1970-2000)* (Les presses du réel, 2011). She has been writing many articles and is currently writing a monograph on Nil Yalter and co-editing a collective book, *L'histoire n'est pas donnée – Art contemporain et postcolonialité en France* (PUR).

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Travelling toponymy. Place names in Abdellah Taïa's *Une Mélancolie Arabe*

Recent years have seen a renewed interest in toponymy, i.e. the study of place names, within disciplines ranging from political geography to linguistics and discourse analysis. Current research emphasises the social, historical and political aspects of place names, particularly in post-colonial contexts, and may be fruitfully applied to the analysis of texts on exile and migration, as I will argue in this paper.

Drawing on insights from current toponymy studies and discourse analysis, the paper examines the role of place names in Abdellah Taïa's novel *Une Mélancolie Arabe*, a text where place names play an important role, as the protagonist navigates between his native Morocco, his adopted city Paris, and Cairo, capital of the Arab world; and where the names of the cities come to function as symbolic representations of home and freedom. The use of place names thus becomes a means of recreating places that may be geographically distant, but emotionally close. Moreover, the close relations the text establishes between place names on the one hand, and emotions and affect on the other, give reason to reconsider the textual and mnemonic functions of place names, as simultaneously linguistic signs and visual signals.

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Identity Construction and Social Actors in Short (Documentary) Films on Immigration in Today’s Italy

The present contribution proposes to investigate how (short) documentary films address immigration issues within Italy, which is generally perceived as the main gateway to Europe. Since the beginning of the century, immigrants and asylum seekers arrive in Lampedusa and, if not deported, are relocated throughout Italy. Along with other types of narrative, (short) documentary films represent these (im)migration fluxes in order to raise awareness among a wider audience in a globalized context.

Of particular interest is the way the (inter)national documentaries depict these immigrants. Research has revealed that the portrayal of the immigrants is the result of a complex identity construction in relation to other social actors within the legal, social, media and cultural sphere (such as representatives of law enforcement, immigration centers, journalists/reporters and local associations).

The analysis will focus on how the verbal mode (multilingual discourse) and the audiovisual interact in the identity construction of immigrants and -surprisingly- resort to aesthetic devices often associated to fictionalized narratives. Immigrants are depicted as bordercrossers whose identity is characterized by a multi-layered interstitiality.

The contribution will draw examples from a broad corpus of (inter)national documentaries, such as Wim Wenders *Il volo* (2010, 32’), *Il coraggio di essere umani* (2015, 41’), a documentary on the immigration centers of the Consorzio Matrix and *Senza paura. Raccontare, costruire, cambiare* produced by Legacoopsociali (2014, ‘18). These documentaries shed light on immigration processes while problematizing them.

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Inge Lanslots is assistant professor in Discourse Analysis and Italian Culture/Translation at KU Leuven. She is specialized in cultural memory and genre studies. Her research deals with migration, the representation of discourse on mafia-like organizations, Italy's 1968, the G8 2001 (Genova). She is also co-editor of *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani* and the *Moving Texts Series* (Peter Lang).

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Passing Down the Imagined Memories of War: Heritage Language Learning and Socialization Practices in Bosnian Muslim Immigrant Families in Germany

In the context of migration, leaving the country of descent and settling down in a new cultural environment, be it voluntarily or involuntarily, inevitably involves relocation and re-contextualization of narratives and discourses, and ways of behavior specific to the locality from which immigrants originate. For immigrants, however, these linguistic practices are employed to socialize children into appropriate behaviors and "develop cultural knowledge and sensibilities" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011). Nevertheless, this cultural knowledge is not always a result of experience of the socializing agents, but rather a matter of circulating discourses about the current state of affairs in their home countries and nostalgic sentiments, perceptions and assumptions created after they had left their former place of residence. This paper is set out to unveil language socialization practices in two Bosnian Muslim immigrant families in Stuttgart, Germany, and reports how parents, who themselves never had the experience of war, since they moved to Germany in the early days of war in Bosnia, in attempt to transfer their heritage language, through language socialization practices also transfer knowledge about the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-1995 and in this way construct not only identity for their children but also construct them as future "advocates" of what happened in Bosnia in the early 1990s. In this article, it is discussed how dominant discourses and narratives become part of the "imagined" memory. The war, although never experienced, is thus utilized to shape mental representation of Serbs and Croats in children, often through generalizations and exclusion. The

paper demonstrates that in the observed Bosnian immigrant families, the stories about the war are integral part in the process of language learning and identity formation where othering is a common discourse practice. In this way, children are socialized into appropriate conceptualization of their homeland and the situation there and their own identity although they live in Germany in a completely different context, and they are encouraged to accept one dominant, i.e. parental truth about the current situation in the family's country of origin and the people who live there but do not belong to their ethnic group. The data are collected through ethnographic field research and observation of socialization practices of parents with their children engaging in literacy activities such as reading, and storytelling, and having lunch together. The data were analyzed employing narrative and discourse analysis.

Key words: imagined memories, re-contextualization of discourses, Bosnian Muslim immigrants in Germany, language socialization

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The Arts of Migration and Artworks That Travel Across the World

[*The Moving Matters Traveling Workshop*](#) (MMTW) is a flexible, synergetic and mobile platform for artistic research into issues of migration. In our contribution to the seminar we will describe and discuss how, since the moment of its inception in 2013 with the publication of the book *Moving Matters: paths to serial migration* by Susan Ossman, the Traveling Workshop has provided space and means for generating art across visual, literary and performing arts. We explore how the workshop enables a mobile space of reflexivity regarding movement and its narration.

The artists of *MMTW* were born and have lived in diverse countries, yet they share the experience of multiple migrations. Each meeting is held in a new location, in a different type of locale and focuses on a specific theme. Exhibitions, performances and participatory events have been developed in California, Clichy, Amsterdam and Bucharest. We examine how this collective, multi-sited process of “inhabitation” has led artists to develop work that raises issues

of mobility, subjectivity and culture. We analyze how this mobile space of art production, research and social engagement, which is not simply “about” migrants or migration but defined by and shaped by migration enables provocative interventions on themes of mobility and migration across art and scholarship. We will show how social categories derived from recognizing shared experiences of migration can be socially, critically and artistically productive, and how the ‘traveling’ of the Workshop itself can be expressive of the core concept of the joint artistic work, human mobility.

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“They are all Turks, but very very nice”: Re-placing Contemporary Artists of Turkish Origin

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of immigrant-artists whose work derives from their experience of homeland, migration, and encounter. Yet, these are facing a vacuum in the art world, for all too frequently they are only connected to the country of origin and their art is confined to their alleged original culture. One such group of artists, contemporary visual artists from Turkey, who has left ‘home’ for various reasons such as migration or education has emerged as a distinctive voice on the contemporary European art scene. What makes these artists pertinent for an investigation of new forms of identity and citizenship making in contemporary Europe is that their art is a means to present the sheer diversity of artistic approaches that address and incorporate cultural interaction as well as confrontation with the identity and cultural ‘container’ that is Western Europe. The artists represent both personal and societal memories, recalling, retracing, and giving a renewed presence to the past through their depictions and representations. Adopting their art as ‘snap shots’ of identity negotiations, this paper will query how mobility and migration shapes artistic imagination and production, focusing on case studies that can shed light on the (re)imaginings of new European identities through art. Using the artworks as laboratories or ‘snap shots’ of identity negotiations, this paper will query how mobility and transnational encounters shape artistic production, and how, in turn, such transnational and intercultural works can shed new light on the making of contemporary European identities ‘beyond borders’ that integrates Turkey through art.

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The Modern Mediterranean?: mobility in the contemporary Mediterranean and the migrant crises of the 21st century

In light of the Mediterranean’s resumed political and historical significance due to the migrant crises of the 21st century, the recent conceptualization of the Mediterranean as a space of modernity and movement challenges the manner in which the sea is regarded historically. Some scholars argue that Italy in particular is an amalgam of mobilities: the mobility of its citizens as they emigrated to the Americas in the previous two centuries, colonial mobility during Italy’s own ‘Scramble for Africa’ and lastly, the mobility of the contemporary migrant crisis. Treating these different instances of movement as exemplifications of mobility allows us to reconsider the meaning of mobility and construct Italy (and the Mediterranean) as a mobile and fluid space. By the early 1990s, migrants became integrated into the Italian literary scene, adding depth and enriching the contemporary characterization of the Mediterranean Sea. While authors like Fernand Braudel portray the Mediterranean as a space of continuity, relying on a stable substratum and resistant to change, recent attempts by scholars to construct a modern representation of the sea seem to disregard its characterization in migrant literature - in Chiamatemi Ali (1991) and Regina di fiori e di perle (2007), the migrant struggle across the sea is characterized as an ancient struggle. While contemporary scholars insist on a modern, reworked, and revitalized image of the sea, examples in migrant literature do not appear to share this view.

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The Quest for Identity Through Bodily Pain

The present paper aims to address how (cultural) identity in Igiaba Scego's literary works is achieved through a struggle of bodily pain. Scego, born in Italy by Somali parents, is one of Italy's leading authors of so-called migrant literature, and recurrent themes in her texts are Italy's missing confrontation with its colonial past and the concepts of hybrid identity, belonging and the sense of feeling at home. Narrating from a female point of view, Scego moreover explores in depth the female migrant condition which, as often in her texts, is accentuated by the migrant body's diversity and subsequent enhanced visibility. Many of the texts' protagonists suffer from inflicting self-harm and physical pain as they struggle to come to a reconciliation of cultural and gender identity, thus exemplifying what the psychologist Anna Motz (2010) writes about the body as an object onto which the divided self can express itself "both as aggressor and nurse, in the service of the final aim of re-interpretation and creation of a coherent sense of self" (83). My analysis of Scego's divided and suffering protagonists will be based on readings of the novels *Oltre Babilonia* (2008) and *La mia casa è dove sono* (2010), as well as the short stories "Dismatria" and "Salsicce" (2005).

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Drawing Transcultural Spaces: Takoua Ben Mohamed's Graphic Narratives across Languages and Media

My paper presents the first stage of a research project on graphic narratives of migration across languages and media. Focusing on work of the comic artist Takoua Ben Mohamed, my presentation will endorse the interdisciplinary perspective of this seminar on contemporary textual, material and visual expressions that represent, discuss and problematize migration.

Building on recent scholarship on the transcultural and transnational movement of memory (Erll, 2011; Rigney and De Cesari, 2014), my research considers the deterritorialised, multilingual and multimedial quality of memory in our globalised and interconnected world. Focusing on the acts of transmission performed in Italy by people of North African background, my work explores the transcultural and fluid nature of the memory landscape of Italy.

The paper features the graphic narratives of Takoua Ben Mohammed, a young woman comic artist of Tunisian background based in Rome (Spadaro, 2016). My presentation examines two of her ongoing projects that manifest contemporary dynamics of memory production in Italy. First, 'Il Fumetto intercultura', a series of vignettes conceived to share on Facebook the everyday experience of a young veiled Muslim woman growing up in Rome. This is now a successful exhibition and an education project that travels across Italy, questioning ideas of homogeneity and authenticity Italian culture, belonging and citizenship.

The second project is Takoua Ben Mohammed's graphic family memoirs. This aims to carry the memories – particularly women's memories - of activists of the moderate Islamist Ennahda movement that have fled Tunisia for Italy since the 1980s, such as her family.

Focusing on these graphic narratives produced in Italy, my aim is to explore the creative and multimedial quality of contemporary acts of transmission that challenge existing understandings of multilingualism, multilingual literature and aesthetic practices in Europe and in our interconnected world.

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Art and Contemporary Irish Emigrants: Aesthetics and Networks of Affect in David Monahan's "Leaving Dublin"

Following the financial crisis of 2008, Ireland experienced a sharp increase in emigration. The Central Statistics Office estimated a 40% increase in the number of emigrants leaving Ireland between April of 2008 and April of 2009 compared to the previous year.¹ Emigration continued to increase through 2013 showing only a slight decline beginning in 2014.² This paper will examine photographer David Monahan's effort to commemorate this wave of emigration through a series of portraits entitled "Leaving Dublin". Created between 2010 and

2013, each of the 84 portraits depicts an individual or family who would soon emigrate for economic reasons posed in a place in Dublin chosen by the participant for its personal significance.

Based both on analysis of the images, the context of their creation and exhibition, and an interview with the artist, I will look at the work through the lens of networks, aesthetics, and affect theory. Although many artists have addressed Ireland's long history of emigration, including many works over the past 15 years, "Leaving Dublin" is unique in its focus on commemorating contemporary emigrants and the use of portraiture. Additionally, the project relied on the use of the Internet and social media for both its creation and dissemination. I will consider how the Internet has changed the affective experience of emigration, the significance of the 2008 financial crisis, and how these are reflected in the production, reception, and aesthetic qualities of "Leaving Dublin".

1

http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2009/popmig_2009.pdf

2

<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2015/>

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