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Narrating Lives – Telling (Hi)stories
Transcultural Readings

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Special Issue in Memory of

Kay Schaffer

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Transcultural Readings
Essays in Memory of Kay Schaffer

This issue of the 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien | Australian Studies Journal' is unusual in the journal's history in more than one sense. First and foremost it is unique in its dedication to an exceptionally passionate scholar and compassionate human being, a pre-eminent feminist critic, a superior life writing scholar and human rights expert in Australian academia with a global reach. In honor of Kay Schaffer's excellent achievements this issue assembles essays by colleagues and friends from Australia, the United States of America and Germany, who share her interests and were inspired by her work and her personality. While all essays connect with one of Kay's key areas of research, they are not limited thematically to an Australian context, expanding the geographical scope of the journal to explore links between different areas of research beyond disciplinary boundaries. This is in keeping with Kay's transdisciplinary curiosity and the ever increasing scope of the geographical focus of her own research, amply documented in her many monographs and co-authored publications: 'Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition' (1987/1988); 'In the Wake of First Contact: The Eliza Fraser Stories' (1995/1996); 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition' (with Sidonie Smith 2004); 'Women Writers in Postsocialist China' (with Xianlin Song 2014).

It was the very influential foundation of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) in Beijing in 1999, in which Kay along with American, Australian, Chinese and European life writing scholars participated, which opened up an international collaboration in which she played a major part. While I, Beate, experienced Kay from the sideline at the IABA conference in Melbourne in 2002, we officially met at the IABA conference in Mainz, Germany, organized by my husband, Alfred Hornung in 2006. I was immediately taken by her vibrant personality and her many scholarly and professional achievements, which would eventually channel into the establishment of Australian Studies at the University of Cologne. I admired the power and energy she had invested in the development of Women's Studies at the University of Adelaide, in serving as President of the Cultural Studies Association of Australia and on the editorial boards of the 'Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature', of 'Continuum', and of 'Hecate'. Most of all I felt inspired by her incredibly impressive writing, and from the charismatic lively engaging presentation of her work at consecutive IABA conferences, as well as during her tenure as guest Chair at Cologne University.

When my colleague Dany Adone and I established the Dr. R. Marika Chair of Australian Studies at Cologne University with the support of the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst, we immediately turned to Kay to be the first Chair holder in literary studies in 2010. Kay's research focus on gender studies and her interest in Indigenous Australian writing ('Indigenous Australian Voices: A Reader', co-edited with Jennifer Sabbioni and Sidonie Smith, 1998) made her an ideal first representative, setting the course for those who followed. Her stay was decisive for the development and eventual inauguration of the Centre for Australian Studies at Cologne University in 2017. The shaping of the Centre's three focal research and teaching areas on Indigenous cultures, on the environment and on migration, owes much to Kay's inspirational influence. I am so grateful for her scholarly and professional inspirations and pleasant conversations we shared during her stay. In this spirit, a weekend at our home in Mainz led not only to the exploration of wineries in the Rhine Valley in the company of her husband Robert Iseman, but also to the conception of a conference in Cologne, the outcome of which turned into our co-edited book on 'Decolonizing the Landscape: Indigenous Cultures in Australia' (2014). Kay's presence as guest Chair engendered the interest in Australian Studies among Cologne University students and among my team of young researchers who profited from Kay's expertise and advice. Particularly close relations formed with Friederike Danebrock and Victoria Herche. Over and above her foundational role at the University of Cologne, Kay Shaffer shared her Australian Studies and life writing expertise with colleagues and students at other German universities in frequent guest lectures. In her repeated participation in the Summer School on the Cultural Study of the Law at the University of Osnabrück she brought her Human Rights expertise to bear.

I, Victoria, met Kay for the first time as a student in 2010 during her time as guest professor at Cologne University. In my role as personal assistant to the Chair I not only had the chance to attend all of Kay's seminars and lectures, but also supported her in all bureaucratic and everyday occurrences (she every so often called me her 'Governess'). While I had close connections to Australia through friends and previous visits, it had until then never occurred to me to specialize in the field of Australian Studies academically. Kay's inspiring teaching and generosity in sharing ideas and texts (the reading material she left with us filled several harddrives) laid the foundation of my interest in the field of Australian cinema which eventually, some years later, resulted in my dissertation project on Coming of Age in Australia. She has always been supportive to younger colleagues and students, we very much enjoyed her company and benefited from her intellect. When the summer term had ended, students of her seminars handed over farewell cards and presented her flowers. On their last day, the entire Cologne team accompanied Kay and Robert to the train station and waved them goodbye in tears. Within the short period of one semester, Kay had shaped and inspired us tremendously.

During a six months visiting fellowship at Monash University, Melbourne, in 2014/15, I was invited by Kay and Robert to spend several days in their beautiful home in Adelaide. Their hospitality has been unmatched, they spoiled me with

an incredible amount of food, wine, stories, and books. It was such a pleasure to spend these days with them and to also meet their family. We spent a memorable day in Coorong National Park, the coastal lagoon south-east of Adelaide. I vividly remembered how Kay had taught the Hindmarsh Island Bridge controversy to us Cologne students in her seminar on "Indigenous Australia: Literary and Visual Cultures" in 2010. This day on the traditional lands of the Ngarrindjeri people was foundational for me to further appreciate the acknowledgement of Aboriginal Country. Kay has taught us the importance of who owns a story, of who tells a story, the role of knowledge as a means of power, and to respect when one is not meant to know.

While I am grateful for the regular emails and exchanges we had after this visit until her untimely death in December 2019, it also aches me to think that this was the last time I saw her. I will be forever grateful that I had the chance to have worked closely with her. She is greatly missed.

The contributions to this issue of the 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien | Australian Studies Journal' reflect Kay's wide spectrum of affiliations while at the same time foregrounding the intricate interweaving of relationships which Kay encouraged and facilitated, bringing people together and teasing out shared interests and concerns across different disciplinary contexts. The opening essays are by Sidonie Smith (University of Michigan) and Kateryna Olijnyk Longley (Murdoch University, Perth), two eminent scholars and longtime colleagues and friends of Kay who – since the days of the foundation of IABA in Beijing – have shared her interest in and dedication to life writing. Sidonie Smith's very personal memory "For Kay, and the Collaboration we Shared" beautifully captures Kay's achievements and vibrant personality focusing on 25 years of their private and professional relation which resulted in two co-edited books, on 'Indigenous Australian Voices' (1998), and 'The Olympics at the Millennium' (2000), followed by the co-authored book on 'Human Rights' and 'Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition' (2004).

Kateryna Olijnyk Longley's essay "Life Games: Memory and Postmodern Biography", written in 1998, remembers the joint trip with Sidonie, Kay and their partners to the foundational IABA conference in 1999 which brought together

life writing scholars from all over the globe with a profound impact on the proliferation and evaluation of life writing in academia. Kat's exploration of the link between postmodernism's distrust of memory and reality and the simultaneous "desire for [...] personal stories, stories of the self" is even more timely today in the context of social media as a platform of life writing and the construction of "alternative truths" in the current post-truth era. Focusing on the hybridity of life writing in-between non-fiction and fiction her essay centers on self-consciously fragmentary literary texts (ranging from Jean Baudrillard and Roland Barthes to Victor Burgin and Stephen Muecke), engaged in the game of seemingly "deny[ing] the possibility of memory and reality while simultaneously seeking and invoking them".

By contrast Paul Arthur (Edith Cowan University, Perth) sets out to disentangle "Fake History, Trauma, and Memory" by looking into two very different diasporas in Australia, namely that of Ukrainian immigrants and that of displaced Aboriginal people, with respect to the role of digital technology in collecting, preserving, and making public hitherto denied and silenced histories. For this comparative analysis Paul Arthur juxtaposes his own family history, the 1949 immigration of his Ukrainian grandparents and his mother Kateryna Longley and life in the Ukrainian diaspora in Adelaide and Perth, with the history of Indigenous displacement in his hometown Fremantle.

Paul Arthur's project of bringing silenced histories to public attention is also the central concern of the essay on "Biological Warfare in North America and Australia: Smallpox and Colonial Violence" by historian Norbert Finzsch (University of Cologne). His exploration of evidence for a "genocidal colonial biowarfare" against Indigenous people in Australia draws on evidence of such practice in North America between the 1760s and the 1780s. Using the criminal law terms of "means, motive, and opportunity" he makes the case for a calculated dissemination of small pox amongst Indigenous people in Australia in the late 1780s.

Stephen Muecke (University of New South Wales/Notre Dame University) looks into the continuous relevance of Indigenous knowledge and its increasing global perception and acknowledgement in the wake of the current climate crisis. Stephen Muecke's award-winning writing crosses boundaries between genres and cultures, between fiction and non-fiction, between Western and Indigenous science arguing for a process of continuous transformation. Kay has explored this shared interest in notions of "connectivity" in her discussion of Muecke's 'No Road' (1997) in our co-edited book on 'Decolonizing the Landscape'. In his essay Muecke takes Kay's and Sidonie Smith's investigation of "local and global transits of storytelling" in 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives' as starting point for his own exploration of "Creativity, Critique and the Problem of Situated Knowledge". In correlating Donna Haraway's and Bruno Latour's concepts of modernity he foregrounds the relevance of Indigenous sciences in the context of the Anthropocene.

The focus of these essays on Indigenous cultures and the colonial history of oppression of Indigenous rights ties in with Kay's interest in and research on forms of decolonization and human rights issues, which Kay extended to other geographical regions in the second decade of the new millennium when she

co-authored with Xianlin Song (University of Western Australia) a volume on 'Women Writers in Postsocialist China' (2014). Song's essay on "Grass Roots Activism for Rural Women in China" evolved from this collaboration as the research data were collected on a field trip Xianlin Song and Kay took together to Beijing in 2011. The essay explores the work of the 'Cultural Development Centre for Rural Women' in Beijing which aims at making the voices of women migrant workers heard through publications using women's stories and "offer[ing] advice in the form of self-help manuals".

In his essay on "Kenneth Slessor, Film Writing, and Popular Culture" Philip Mead (University of Western Australia/University of Melbourne) engages with the life and work of poet and journalist Kenneth Slessor (1901-1971), tracing his "largely unnoticed" contribution to the emergence of film criticism in Australia. Philip Mead presents Slessor's film writing as a fascinating "case study in the history of print culture in mid-twentieth century Australia" and a "unique chronicle of one of the prehistories of contemporary media culture". Philip Mead's piece also calls for a more detailed biographical analysis of the film writing of Slessor, whose personality and life emerge from these texts.

The final section of essays follows Kay's extension of Australia-related issues to contemporary cultures outside of Australia across different media and art forms. Despite their widely different topics they share Kay's concerns about intercultural dialogue and transcultural communication.

Sabine N. Meyer (University of Bonn) investigates "Transculturality and Filmic Practice: Cultural Difference and Transcultural Belonging in 'Babel' (2006)" in the context of oppositional readings of the film as demonstration of either the failure or the success of communication. Meyer's own approach to the "multi-narrative, non-linear drama which links stories taking place in Japan, Morocco, Mexico, and the United States" through the framework of transculturality enables her to foreground the film's thematic as well as formal emphasis on the necessary coexistence and entanglement of cultural difference and transcultural belonging.

Notions of geopolitical and cultural mechanisms of exclusion in relation to aspects of human interconnectedness, which Sabine N. Meyer emphasizes in her reading of 'Babel', are also central to Friederike Danebrock's essay on "'The Ninth Prison: Desert Islands and no Witch in Margaret Atwood's 'Hag-Seed'". Drawing on the intersections between diverse histories of exclusion Danebrock focuses on the witch Sycorax from 'The Tempest', whose abject femininity is haunting Shakespeare's play from the margins, not even mentioned in Margaret Atwood's novel adaptation (2016). According to Danebrock's reading Atwood's transfer of the plot of 'The Tempest' "from an island of exile to a modern-day prison" and her omission of any reference to the magic of the "blue-eyed hag" disambiguates Shakespeare's text leaving no room for albeit marginalized "repositories of liberative fantasies" of alternative worlds.

Beate Neumeier's essay "Of Boats and Walls: Migrating Iconographies" intersects with the previous ones as it looks into recent art projects centering on notions of the boat and the wall in relation to present and past examples of forced migration targeting international audiences. Ranging from art installations (exhibited at the Venice Biennale 2019 and the Sydney Biennale 2018 as well

as in Prague 2017) to immersive art (performed in Paris 2019) the examples draw on geographically and historically different contexts, raising questions about how art addresses the difficulty of speaking to global spectators in a call for an ethical response and with the hope for forging a global solidarity community as prerequisite for change.

In the final essay, "'Listen to your tribal voice' – Embodying Locality in German-Australian Music Performances", Victoria Herche addresses an exploitative example of a transnational and intercultural encounter as a forum for esoteric and exoticized images of colourful 'authentic' ethnicity. In 1998, German musician Peter Maffay created an album called 'Begegnungen' (encounters) in collaboration with artists from all corners of the world, including the Aboriginal Australian band Yothu Yindi. It is discussed in what ways Aboriginality and 'world music' is performed in the context of international solidarity, how cultural connotations circulate and how these meanings are publicly understood by Maffay's audience.

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Sidonie Smith

For Kay, and the Collaboration We Shared

Pioneering scholar of Australian women's writing and post/colonial literary cultures. Fearless feminist cultural theorist. Tireless advocate of women's studies curricula and programs. Educator of sometimes hostile colleagues. Dedicated mentor to other scholars and to graduate students. Inspiring professor in the classroom. These were the roles Kay superbly inhabited throughout her career. These her enduring legacies. Sustained brilliance, capacious interests, and ready ambition. These were her defining scholarly attributes. Sparkling beauty, warmth, and generosity. These were the animating features of her soul. Friendship. This was the elixir of her life well-lived, her spiritual center.

Kay shared her life with Robert Iseman and their beloved daughters Laura and Juliet. The girls were her pride, and Robert her ever steady, always loving partner. And she shared her life with so many colleagues in Australia and elsewhere around the world. Friendships are individualized, they are their own distinct arena of becoming through exchange with someone who greets you as you are. So every friendship is loving and sustaining and memorable in its own way. Every friendship makes us anew through its own trajectory. Kay and I were born within a month and a half of one another. We share a generational story of feminist scholars in the academy. And we shared twenty-five years of our lives, in work and in play.

I cannot imagine my career as a feminist scholar of life writing over the last twenty-five years without my friendship with Kay. We bonded the minute we met in the halls of the Women's Studies program at Adelaide University in January of 1994 when I went to Australia as a Senior Fulbright Fellow, first at Adelaide University and then at Murdoch University out west. Through a mutual friend, I knew of Kay before I arrived. But then there she was, a resilient bundle of intellectual and social energy in a petite frame. Even in those early months, Kay taught me a lot about enjoying life, pulling me out of my driven intensity so we could eat good food, drink good wine, party in the Clare and on Kangaroo Island. She introduced me to her wonderful friends, conspirators of camaraderie.

I don't recall that we talked about doing a book together in those early months of our friendship. Kay was deep in the details of her Eliza Fraser book at the time. That book, published in 1995, explored more than a century and a half of narratives, images, and filmic versions of the story of this English woman shipwrecked on the Australian coast in 1836, where she lived with an Aboriginal community until her rescue. This sensational episode in Australian history, with its many afterlives, offered Kay the opportunity to trace historical discourses of colonialism, race, gender, and nation. I too was deep in projects as well.

But I knew when I left Australia in July that Kay and I would keep coming together, that we would together make ourselves different kinds of scholars,

engage in new projects beyond our scholarly comfort zones. I would return to Australia in late 1996 so that we could complete work on the first book we did, an edited collection entitled 'Indigenous Australian Voices' (1998). With Indigenous scholar Jennifer Sabioni, we assembled an anthology of poetry, artwork, and prose of thirty-six contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and artists. The anthology offered diverse imaginative engagements with individual and kinship relationships and refractions of the origin stories of 'dreamtime' that inform both a resistance to the genocidal heritage of Australian colonization and a unique focus for Indigenous identity. I can conjure up a scene of Kay and I in the condo she rented on Marine Terrace, across from the Success Boat Harbour in Fremantle (where she was spending a study leave). In frenzied activity we struggled to get all the details of the project under control in order to send the manuscript off to Rutgers University Press. Last details were hand-written on file cards scattered across the living room floor. We tore them up as we completed each task. In the end, one card remained. It read "Who is Mary?" We never found the answer to that question, which seemed important at the time but remained forever elusive.

Because we energized one another in our work together, we couldn't let go of the idea that we should start another book project. Driving from Fremantle to Perth one day, we spun out ideas for possible edited collections, landing, somewhat ridiculously, on the idea for what became our second book 'The Olympics at the Millennium: Power, Politics, and the Games'. After all, the summer Olympics were going to be held in Sydney in the year 2000. Why not assemble a collection of essays that would explore how The Games are arenas in which individual and team athletic achievement intersect with the politics of national identity in a global context and how they are riven by cultural politics that involve issues of gender and racialization, spectacle and terrorism.

The Sydney Games were two and a half years away – our plan, to publish it the summer before the Games. That didn't quite work out. For one it took us a while to find the right contributors – all of them out of our fields of expertise. Then it took time to get, edit, and get back their contributions. And, though the publication date was officially 1 August 2000, copies of the book didn't make it to Australia until a month later, and they were far too expensive to sell well. Rereading the table of contents this past January, I admitted that the essays are interesting, the issues important. But neither of us could be very active in marketing the book because we weren't sports sociologists or historians. And Rutgers didn't do much to market it either.

A year later Kay and I were at the First International Conference on Auto/Biography, hosted by the Center for World Auto/Biography at Beijing University in late June of 1999. Listening to some of the papers, we suddenly realized that there was a co-authored book to write on "the right to tell one's story" as central to human rights activism. Here was a topic we were prepared to explore, both of us with expertise in genres and modes and media of life writing and its cultural and political efficacies. Thus began our conversations and our struggles to come to an argument about human rights and narrated lives and the ethics of recognition, the title of our 2004 book.

We were privileged to begin those conversations in depth during our August 2000 fellowship at the Rockefeller Foundation's Villa in Bellagio, Italy, perched above Lake Como. For one month we drafted what we anticipated would be the introductory chapter to the book, a discussion of the post-World War II regime of human rights, its history, its infrastructure, and its cultural politics. Thank God, one of the fellows with us during the last week agreed to read our draft – his expertise was in political theory. He was ruthless in his critique. And in the end we jettisoned what we had written, with the recognition that we needed to have written it but that we had to enter our project from a different angle, one based on our expertise. Over the next two years we had to keep before us the injunction to remember what we were trained to write on the subject.

Neither of us could have written 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives' as individual scholars. Together we wrote an influential book on human rights and narrated lives that explores what happens when autobiographical narratives are produced, received, and circulated in the field of human rights. It asks how personal narratives emerge in local settings; how international rights discourse enables and constrains individual and collective subjectivities in narration; how personal narratives circulate and take on new meanings in new contexts; and how and under what conditions they feed into, affect, and are affected by the reorganizations of politics in post-cold war, postcolonial, globalizing human rights contexts.

After our idyllic stay in Bellagio, Kay and I would come together in Adelaide in 2002, in Canberra at the Australian National University (ANU) during a joint fellowship at the humanities center there, and in a hotel in New York City where we finished last minute editorial details. The book appeared in 2004. To our dismay, we realized that Palgrave had inserted "political science" on the back cover for the purposes of categorization in catalogs and bookstores. There was nothing to be done. It had been miscategorized. But it found its way to people in life writing studies and the cultural studies of literary formations and the literatures of testimony and trauma. And to this day I talk to and hear from young scholars who have been influenced by our book. Kay would have loved to hear that on 20 June 2019, Siobhan Campbell from the Open University in London came up to me at an International Auto/Biography Studies conference in Madrid to tell me how important the book had been in her own teaching and for one of her doctoral students. That student did a dissertation in which she worked with survivors of Hiroshima, interviewing them in Japan. In her final exchange with them, she went with survivors to the places of their experience of survival where they opened up and told their stories to her.

In 2012, I traveled to Adelaide in early July so that Kay and I could write a paper we were to deliver at the 2012 Meeting of the International Auto/Biography Association at ANU on July 20th. By then we had begun thinking about the impact of the rise of social media on acts of witnessing to violence. So we wrote a piece that was subsequently published as "Witnessing in the Digital Age". That was our last moment of collaboration.

Let me say something about how Kay and I worked together. We would begin to think as a twosome, melding together our voices, adding our particular expertise and intellectual preoccupations, and our own specific ways of stating ideas.

But we worked differently. Kay took copious notes as she read, and I can see before her those pads of notes through which she registered not only what she read but what she thought of what she read. She would deftly review for me the argument, the line of development, the implications. She pondered her notes before she wrote, and what she wrote was often in fully formed thoughts. I, on the other hand, would take few notes, though I would capture passages that we might quote. Then I'd compose at the computer, typing quickly for the pleasure of seeing something taking shape on the screen. What I wrote was never any good at the beginning; it was sometimes undisciplined and always inelegant. But I took comfort and gained confidence from thinking that I had the beginnings of something. This is how we worked on our separate assignments for the book, the separate chapters we drafted. But when we were writing essays or chapters or introductions together, Kay sat with her notes in a chair talking through ideas and I sat at the computer capturing our thoughts as quickly as I could get them down. Then we would read through what we had written and work through every sentence ruthlessly.

I know Kay got frustrated with me for my failure to let up the pressure and the critique of every sentence and every idea. I remember our late afternoon sessions at the humanities institute at the ANU. We would go to a different space to read through materials we had ready from our work of the day. And she would have to tell me over and over again: Sid, say three good things you see in what we've just written! Please, before you start in with your critiques. I did my best to practice saying three good things for a while and then let it slip, feeling the pressure of getting things done. To this day, I try to remember her mantra – say three good things – when I talk with students about their dissertation chapters.

As I said, Kay would get frustrated with me; but we never had an argument when we were writing or working on a project together. Perhaps because we just had too much fun together. For all the while we were becoming different scholars together, we were traveling together, with our partners, with friends, and sometimes just the two of us. Kay put together a beautiful photo book, which she titled 'Travels with Greg' (for my husband who died in May 2020, after living many years with dementia). She brought it to Ann Arbor when Kay and Robert and Juliet were in the US in 2017. It's a record of much of those travels: In South Australia, China, Italy twice, Western Australia and the Kimberleys, Portugal, Vietnam, Croatia, Brighton, Banff and Jaspar Park, Chicago and Ann Arbor.

And there was our last trip out to Western Australia in May 2019, when I traveled to Adelaide. She gave me a wonderful party. And then we caught the jet plane to Perth to see our friend Barbara Milech and our friends in Fremantle Kat and Richard Longley. Then Kay and I drove down to Margaret River, where we walked the cliff edge and watched the sunsets at Surfer's Point in Prevelly, and climbed around the lighthouse at Cape Naturaliste, felt the pressure of a falcon's claws on our gloved hands at Eagles Heritage, the raptor sanctuary. And then we had a glorious afternoon of fine food and amazing wines at Vasse Felix winery. In the sun at a table on the balcony, we were presented with the menu, which included five flutes of wine. Our waiter recited the wine list for those flutes, which included three Chardonnays. Kay gathered herself up, as she did so

often, and expressed displeasure at the list. She made it clear that a Chardonnay rarely got on any list she might be keeping in her capacious memory bank of bottles she'd enjoyed across her lifetime. But the waiter remained unperturbed, insisting that Kay had never had Chardonnays like those at Vasse Felix, that they were indeed remarkable and memorable. And they were. Kay and I were left speechless at how they slipped over the palate and lingered in the aftertaste. Kay knew she didn't have many months left to live. But those days we spent together she remained a remarkable model of courage, elegant resolve, and grace, living intensely in the moment, celebrating friendship and sipping away to the last wine diamonds in her glass.

Let me end with fragmented glimpses of Kay that console me now.

She had a beautiful singing voice. I can see her at the piano in the largest common room at the Rockefeller Foundation's Villa in Bellagio, the composer and pianist John Musto nearby, and Kay's voice floating above us as we sat and listened and watched her pleasure in performance.

She had her own way of eating. I can see her at the dining table, anywhere we ate together, her hands and elbows moving efficiently as she cut everything on her plate into bite-size amounts before she even began eating. The plate was always magically organized so it stood ready for her to begin.

I see her standing before an audience when we gave talks. Trained in debate, Kay never seemed anxious answering questions or fielding challenges to her arguments. She stood her ground, her shoulders back, and mastered her piece of the stage.

She had wonderful posture, evincing groundedness with power. I tried to imitate her, to stand straighter when I was around her.

She dressed in vivid colors, those dense hues that caught the eye. We shared a color palette of blues and purples, reds, and yes, black. But unlike me, Kay wore deep pink with aplomb. It always gave a soft glow to her facial coloring.

And then there was the relationship Kay had to the camera. The camera loved Kay; its aperture capturing the liveliness of her face and the confidence and power of her embodiment. I have no photos of Kay looking anything but beautiful.

I was the beneficiary of Kay's desire to share remarkable book projects; to share her family and her community of friends; to share her love of travel; to share her love of pleasure in living well. I was the beneficiary of her commitment to living fully, actively, and joyously in the face of her knowledge of imminent dying. The memory of Kay's voice, of her embodied habits, of her tensile energy, of her indomitable spirit, of her openness to grace, fills my heart as I write. Those memories bring with them the knowledge that our friendship will always persist, if in another mode.

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Kateryna Olijnyk Longley

Life Games

Memory and Postmodern Biography

> The belief that she somehow stands behind it all and can be rescued by the historian or biographer may be a belief necessary to the task, but it is an illusion.[1]

In June 1999 Kay Schaffer, Sidonie Smith, and I travelled to China with our partners – from our far-flung homes in South Australia, Michigan, and Western Australia, respectively – to attend the First International Auto/Biography Conference at Beijing University, where the convener Zhao Baisheng formed the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA). Almost exactly 20 years later, for a few days in May 2019, the three of us came together again in Fremantle, Western Australia, knowing it would be for the last time.

At the time of the foundational Beijing conference I was interested in apparent tensions and contradictions between late-20th-century theories of literary postmodernism, which were still influential at the time, and the practical demands of writing about a life – whether one's own or another's. Originally an academic interest, pursued through the works of Samuel Beckett, this became much more than that for me. In the late 1990s, as a lecturer at Murdoch University, I had worked for more than a decade in a thriving milieu of debate on topics in contemporary critical theory with colleagues who had contributed significantly to postmodern thinking, including John Frow, Rita Felski, Toby Miller, Horst Ruthrof, Bob Hodge, Vijay Mishra, and Niall Lucy, but at the same time I was speaking almost daily on the phone to my Ukrainian parents who lived in Adelaide, and intermittently gathering their memories, recounted in Ukrainian, as true stories of their lives. I felt as though I was caught between two belief systems, both of which I respected – one that critiqued the authority of conventional linear narrative and exposed its historical complicity with colonialism, racism, patriarchy, class inequality, and social injustice generally, and the other that celebrated individual story-telling that relied on traditional narrative as a means to capture and preserve memories and lives. And so, following the latter pattern, I listened and wrote down the words of my parents as quickly and faithfully as I could, in translation, in my notebooks – in a process that appeared to be anything but postmodern.

Put simply, the dilemma for me was that a chasm was opening up between the tenets of postmodern theory and the basic principles of biographical processes as I was experiencing them in my daily life. Adherence to one seemed to cancel out the possibility of the other – and yet both seemed necessary in order to present and honour real lives.

1 Kay Schaffer: In the Wake of First Contact, p. 14.

Around that time I wrote a paper with the title "Life Games: Memory and Postmodern Biography", which I presented at a conference.[2] Reproduced here, it offers a pathway back in time to an era before the digital revolution flooded critical theory with new questions and new dilemmas and delivered a world of social media connectivity where contemporary lives exist in posthuman and posttruth global contexts. It appears to me that these 21st-century contexts represent extensions rather than negations of the late-20th-century postmodernist trajectory and so, although the paper is caught in a time warp, it delineates a set of opposing pulls and pressures that continue to be felt in our lives, perhaps even more strongly now – between the desire for certainty, solidity, and continuity of meaning and the ever-escalating sense of the ephemeral and ungraspable nature of the world – and ourselves.

Life Games: Memory and Postmodern Biography (1998)

The subject of this paper is the special position of auto/biography or life narrative in the context of postmodernist modes of artistic production. More specifically, I want to draw attention to the powerful and highly paradoxical position that life writing, and life narratives more generally, occupy at the close of the 20th century as postmodern practices. My argument is that the very old-fashioned and tame image that auto/biography has long had now urgently needs to be rethought. This is because in its various forms, both new and old, auto/biography is now a major player in every aspect of the game of postmodern cultural representation.

At the heart of the paradox is the fact that while there has been a massive increase in its popularity, auto/biography has remained largely outside of the range of vision of contemporary poststructuralist critical theory.[3] This can be explained by the fact that it has been regarded in the past as a comparatively primitive and naive mode, not worthy of serious consideration. Further, since the term embraces a great variety of styles of recording and representation, it has also been seen as a messy genre, if a genre at all. Although obviously and closely related to history, auto/biography has never been recognised as important enough to warrant the kinds of critique that broader historical discourses have attracted. Nor has it enjoyed the respect given to narrative fiction as a *creative* art that can be used to serve postmodernist principles or poststructuralist approaches.

In the introduction to his book 'The Art of Biography', Paul Murray Kendall wrote, "For centuries, history has regarded biography as a sort of poor relation, a hanger-on", and he refers to the example of an 18th-century historian who once confessed that he had "several times deviated and descended from the dignity of an historian, and voluntarily fallen into the lower class of biographers".[4]

2 This paper was delivered at the Postmodernism in Practice Conference, Adelaide, February 1998.
3 The neglect is surprising in the context of the strong interest in subjectivity and authorship.
4 Paul Murray Kendall: The Art of Biography, p. 3.

But if biography has been considered a low form, autobiography has been even further down the scale, for similar reasons. As James Olney puts it, in his essay "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment":

> Autobiography is both the simplest of literary enterprises and the commonest. Anybody who can write a sentence or even speak into a tape recorder or to a ghost writer can do it. [...] [T]here are no rules or formal requirements binding the autobiographer – no restraints, no necessary models, no obligatory observances. [...] In talking about autobiography, one always feels that there is a great and present danger that the subject will slip away all together, that it will vanish into thinnest air, leaving behind the perception that there is no such creature as autobiography and that there never has been – that there is no way to bring autobiography to heel as a literary genre.[5]

While there have been attempts from time to time to overcome this image of casual amateurishness, at least for biography, by generating prescriptive "rules",[6] all forms of life writing have resisted them. But this is surely not a good enough explanation for why they have been pointedly left out in the cold, shunned until very recently by literary and cultural theory as an object of study in spite of the fact that life writing has steadily grown to be one of the publishing industry's hottest commodities? Nor does such an explanation make much sense in the light of postmodernism's successful deconstruction of the whole concept of genre,[7] and the massive amount of attention given to products of popular culture without reference to genre. Yet it seems to me that genre is an issue. Specifically, the neglect of life narrative can be attributed at least partly to its failure to properly belong either to a traditional genre[8] on the one hand or to popular culture on the other. At the same time it is lumbered with the "poor relation" stigma in the context of the respectable genre of history. Life writing has therefore found itself betwixt and between, appended incongruously to a "grand narrative" genre and otherwise left without a niche in the academy.[9]

Another reason for life writing's exclusion is undoubtedly its traditional commitment to "reality" combined with its faith in the communicability of that reality. In other words, the unquestioning acceptance by most life narratives of the reasonableness of their enterprise (e.g., James Knowlson's biography of Beckett and Deirdre Bair's before it) and the lack of self-consciousness about[10] their own problematic position in relation to the "evidence" has marked them as representatives of an essentialist branch of textual activity, one that is highly resistant or impervious to poststructuralist theory and therefore an embarrassment.

That is not to say, of course, that writers, especially of autobiography, have all neglected theory. Nabokov's 'Speak Memory', Barthes' 'Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes', and almost all of Samuel Beckett's work, to name several obvious

5 James Olney (ed.): Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical, pp. 3 f.
6 See Allport's list of rules for writing biography in John A. Garraty: The Nature of Biography, p. 254.
7 See Jacques Derrida: The Law of Genre, in Acts of Literature, p. 6.
8 Pilling comments in the introduction to 'Autobiography and the Imagination' that autobiography is "a much more lawless and various [genre] than those with which we customarily have to deal" (John Pilling: Autobiography and Imagination, p. 1).
9 It is worth pointing out in this context that biography has no place of its own in library catalogues. It is a subset of history, and autobiography is a subset of biography.
10 See Meaghan Morris in Susan Magarey (ed.): Writing Lives, p. 22.

examples, variously explore and play with the process of representing a life, one they loosely refer to as their "own". These are not autobiographies in the traditional sense but rather in the sense that Frederic Jameson brilliantly captures in his reference to Picasso's use of pastiche as a means of creating "*master forgeries* of 'Picasso' himself".[11]

But this is to jump ahead. At this stage I want to focus on the point that auto/biography was largely neglected by theory because it was a hopeless case. Its fundamentalism left no room for debate while its naiveté rendered it anachronistic and weak. It was merely a familiar weed spreading benignly in the formal garden of theory.

How then has life narrative transformed itself from the inconsequential outsider to a key player in the postmodern scene? I believe that the very qualities that were perceived as impediments and difficulties are those that are now enabling life texts to thrive and operate powerfully in a postmodern world. But in order to explain this I need first to briefly trace critical attitudes to auto/biography in recent decades in Western theory.

Writing in 1957 in his book 'The Nature of Reality', John A. Garraty defined biography as "the record of a life" or "the reconstruction of a human life", and he referred to rules that had been developed for the writing of successful biography, notably that the biographer "should aim at maximum fidelity to the life".[12] This book's assumption that the life is readily available for faithful reconstruction is echoed in Leon Edell's book 'Literary Biography', published in the same year, where the biographer is described as the one who "take[s] the base metals that are his disparate facts and turns them into the gold of the human personality. It is", he adds, "a kind of alchemy of the human spirit".[13] In 1989 in Australia, John Colmer, in what is claimed to be the first full-length study of Australian autobiography, approaches the life text with a similar degree of faith. "In reading biography", he writes, "we as readers actively participate in the long and often painful process of searching for the truth about the self and its relation to the ever changing social world".[14] Georges Gusdorf's description of the biographical process, offered in his pioneering essay of 1957,[15] focuses more on process than on faith and so provides an easier entry point for a consideration of autobiography in postmodernist terms – but against all postmodernist principles, it posits a direct recuperative and mimetic correlation between the text and the life. "Autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past", Gusdorf writes; "it is also the attempt and the drama of a man [sic] struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history. This delivering up of earlier beings brings a new stake into the game".[16]

The key words in these accounts, whether of biography or autobiography, are "truth", "life", "self", "reality", and "fidelity" – all easy targets, sitting ducks in fact, in a postmodern environment; and yet, as I try to show, these are the concepts

11 Frederic Jameson: Signatures of the Visible, p. 82.
12 John A. Garraty: The Nature of Reality, pp. 3; 28; 255.
13 Leon Edell: Literary Biography, p. 8.
14 John Colmer: Australian Autobiography, p. 15.
15 See Georges Gusdorf: Conditions and Limits of Autobiography, pp. 28-48.
16 James Olney: Autobiography, p. 43.

that are back with a vengeance, not only permeating the postmodern scene but epitomising it, via life texts in their new incarnations.

You could not discover the limits of the self – so deep a logos does it have (Heraclitus)[17]

I quote Heraclitus here as a reminder that it has long been understood, for at least 2,500 years anyway, that the self is undiscoverable and inexpressible. Virgil, St Augustine and, much later, Dante all wrote about the limitations of memory, comprehension, and expression. It is not a postmodernist discovery. In this century, Walter Benjamin writes of Proust,

> he did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. [...] An experienced event is finite – at any rate confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only the key to everything that happened before it and after it.[18]

Memory then is both the key and the prison. It unlocks space after space, self after self, but it does so *endlessly*. Proust, drawn by the lure of the key, packed into the margins of his text more and more recollections, triggered by the reading of his own drafts, every time they came back from the publisher for proof correction. But Proust did not imagine that in this way he recorded his *life*; he *pointed* to things he remembered in his life and, as Benjamin reports, "Proust's pointing finger is unequalled".[19] That finger nevertheless points towards the past in a gesture of longing and dedication. It signals a desire to delve deeply, one that is at home in romanticism and modernism but should not be possible within postmodernism, except as an irony, because of postmodernism's leanings towards spectacle and surface. I suggest, however, that this desire is not only possible but becoming dominant in contemporary representation; and further, that it is not at odds with postmodernism but rather that it is a manifestation of a rising undercurrent in postmodernist thinking and practice. And this development can be described simply as the resurgence of the desire for stories, especially personal stories, stories of the *self*. Story is gaining ground, not over but within spectacle.

Although this is not the place to engage with debates about the nature of postmodernism, I briefly outline how I use the term for the purposes of this argument and whose work I am drawing upon. Beyond that, the distinctions I have already drawn between aspects of modernism and postmodernism will point to the position I take in relation to these debates. In the interest of brevity and simplicity, I highlight three overviews that capture relevant aspects of postmodernism in terms that are useful for temporarily anchoring my argument.[20] One is that of John Mepham, in his essay "Narratives of Postmodernism", who

17 James Olney: The Meaning of Autobiography, p. 6.
18 Walter Benjamin: Illuminations, p. 204.
19 Ibid., p. 214.
20 Postmodernism is understood broadly here as an "aesthetic and a body of thought" (Patricia Waugh: Practising Postmodernism, p. 3). See also Frederic Jameson's essay "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" in Postmodernism or the Logic of Late Capitalism, pp. 1-54.

describes the postmodern, among other things, as "*undecidability of meaning* arising from *the fragmentation of pluralization of contexts*".[21] Key aspects are the "refusal of representation" and the repudiation of "omnitemporality" that results in the ironic use of old forms, of parody or pastiche.[22] His essay is useful because of its emphasis on the continuities and discontinuities between literary modernism and postmodernism, especially in relation to memory and history. Another overview is offered by John Frow in his essay "What Was Postmodernism?" where he points to postmodernity's relationship to a "set of local crises in the knowledge system". Amongst those he identifies are "a crisis of representation in general, bound up with the commodification and the proliferation of information; and a crisis of the economy of cultural values, in particular of the relations between high and low cultures".[23] A third overview, and the one that focuses most directly on aspects relevant to my topic, is that provided by Leigh Gilmore as a footnote to her essay "The Mark of Autobiography: Postmodernism, Autobiography and Genre", where she writes:

> The field designated by the name "postmodernism" is already far too large to map, but the following emphases are significant to this discussion. In literary studies postmodernism has a range of influential theorists, whose diversity is belied to some extent by a shared descriptive vocabulary. Jean-Francois Lyotard, for example, is illustrative of a postmodernism captivated by a language of surface and structural decompositions. His emphasis rests on dispersal; the fragment characterises postmodern narrative and marks the end of allegiance to all metanarratives. For Jean Baudrillard, the mass culture of television and advertising creates a hyperreal space. Surface compositions and decompositions define the hyperreal as a simulacrum. Simulation is all; the real does not exist.[24]

Leigh Gilmore also refers to Marjorie Perloff's edited collection 'Postmodern Genres' where, to her surprise, there is "a marked area of conceptual agreement" among the twelve otherwise "very diverse group of essays". They "repeatedly use", Perloff writes, "terms like *violation, disruption, dislocation, decentring, contradiction, confrontation, multiplicity* and *indeterminacy*".[25]

If these, broadly, are some of the key features of postmodernism, then clearly, in any move towards postmodernism life narrative would appear to risk much more than other genres. More, because it is more explicitly devoted to personal acts of remembering than is fiction or visual representation or architecture or even history. Whereas life narrative centres on acts of remembering, postmodernism is a culture of forgetting. This is the problem of biography that I want to try to unravel: that in entering postmodernism's territory, as it is everywhere doing, biography risks its very life. There is a set of conflicting drives in auto/biographical representation, so seriously conflicting that they push biography to the edge of impossibility in the current Western cultural context. My argument is that life texts and postmodernism, though unlikely bedfellows, have become, almost unnoticeably, much more deeply and productively entangled

21 Mepham quoted in Edmund J. Smyth (ed.): Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction, p. 147 (original emphasis).
22 Edmund Smyth (ed.): Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction, pp. 141; 143.
23 John Frow: Time and Commodity Culture, p. 63.
24 Kathleen Ashley et al.: Autobiography and Postmodernism, p. 7.
25 Marjorie Perloff: Introduction, in Postmodern Genres, pp. 7 f. (original emphasis).

and interdependent than surface appearances would suggest. Beckett's words – "I invented my memories, not knowing what I was doing, not one is of me" – capture this odd conjunction, of the compulsion to remember with the knowledge that the memories have no necessary connection with reality or the self.[26]

Jean Baudrillard, in a similar vein, writes, "Memory is a dangerous function. It retrospectively gives meaning to that which did not have any".[27] But while this can be understood as a problem for memory, it can also, I believe, be read as memory's special advantage. My point is that memory in a postmodern world is released from any obligation to "give meaning" and this, in a peculiar double flip, gives to memory as much freedom to bestow meaning as fiction has always had, and, what's more, to do so *by any means it chooses.*

The I does not properly refer[28]

In her introductory essay in the collection titled 'Autobiography and Postmodernism', Leigh Gilmore identifies a crisis in autobiography and puts forward the argument that this is the mark of a larger crisis: "What we can call autobiography's resistance to genre can now be taken as a crisis in genre itself". She points out that "constructing autobiography as a genre has depended, at least in part, on domesticating its specific weirdness".[29] Her essay makes an important contribution to life writing studies in that it confronts and theorises the traditional alliance between auto/biography and "dominant discourses of truth telling".[30] Gilmore investigates the disruption of this old alliance in the context of postmodernism and highlights particularly the refusal of life discourses to capitulate to rules of genre, to be domesticated. By this refusal, she argues, genre itself is exposed and weakened.

In my view, however, there is no crisis in life discourses themselves;[31] on the contrary, I would suggest that the current explosion of production and interest in life discourses is evidence of the *liberating* effect of postmodernism in which, belatedly, these discourses have found an ally (whether they wanted to or not). In fact, I would argue that even the most naively "realist" of life discourses can now be understood as belonging to the current moment of postmodernism. The fact that life discourses were never really accepted within the "truth-telling" genres with which they tended to be lumped (such as history), nor within the so-called creative genres of fiction, now gives them a special advantage. They have almost total freedom to transform themselves at will, to adapt to and take advantage of every social and technological change, to play their hand as they like. They are not hampered by the habits of genre or discipline.

26 Samuel Beckett: Molly, p. 399.
27 Jean Baudrillard: Fragments, p. 30.
28 Leigh Gilmore: The Mark of Autobiography, p. 6.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 9.
31 See John Frow: Time and Commodity Culture, on the term 'crisis', p. 63.

Life discourses have always existed as hybrids, and it is precisely their status as beyond genre and discipline, as unruly and undefinable, that now makes them so irrepressible, ubiquitous, and powerful in a postmodernist context. One way or another, "lived experience" is being mimed and reproduced all around us, in forms too various to have special names as well as in the many new hyphenated or collapsed forms that still attract names, such as ficto-criticism, bio-criticism, ficto-biography, faction, historical fiction, ficto-psychology, ficto-medicine, etc. – in film, television interviews, radio talk-back shows, on the World Wide Web, in newspaper reports, magazines, and on Telstra specialty lines. And the trend in all of these is away from the monolithic form, away from genre as we knew it (genre is irrelevant), away even from the narrative sweep that "covers" a life, and instead towards the now overwhelmingly dominant discursive *biographical* form – that of the *fragment*. This is where biography and postmodernism meet and disappear into each other. After centuries of being hammered into some sort of shape, biography has at last splintered into smithereens and so exploded straight into postmodernity.

A promise of fragments is that they alone will survive the catastrophe[32]

Postmodernism, it could be said, has finally released biographical modes from the necessity to fake reality, or more accurately, it has released them from the need to cover up the fact that they are faking it. It has given them new lease on life. But this is a mixed blessing. As Baudrillard puts it,

> The revolution of "lived experience" is without doubt the worst, the revolution which has swept away the secrecy with which everyone surrounded their own life and has transformed that life into a huge "reality show".[...]. What has been liberated is [...] the theatre of banality [...] [with its] exponential stupidity.[33]

This then is the price to be paid for the triumph of life discourses, for their democratisation. The utterly trivial coexists on equal terms with the "major", and the terms are interchangeable. Every life, every idea, has the opportunity to publicise itself, to expose itself and to immortalise itself; but it can equally easily be trashed, turned off, scanned, cut, copied, manipulated, mutilated, or desecrated, to any audience, in any context without permission or knowledge. The bits of "life" that are sent out or seized are beyond anyone's individual control – they can neither be retrieved nor annihilated. 'They have lives of their own'. The "lives" of royals, film stars, presidents, and celebrities, traditionally the targets of biographers, are still the targets but of a different order of investigation and in different company. John Bobbit alongside Clinton or Kennedy (any Kennedy), Princess Diana with Madonna or Sister Teresa, George Solti with Oasis, and in a Who magazine, Gough Whitlam, looking rather startled, in the same "Star Tracks" line-up as Naomi Campbell, Demi Moore, Tony Curtis, Mickey Rooney, and Shaquille O'Neal (23 February 1998). Lives are played for whatever can be squeezed out

32 Jean Baudrillard: Fragments, p. 9.
33 Ibid., p. 98; the television series 'Sylvania Waters' comes to mind.

for the instant gratification of a peep-show glimpse of a story, however fleeting or empty. Even the power of the US president or the British Royal family cannot offer protection against the public addiction to bits of lives, bits of bodies, scraps of text, the more secret the more exciting as they flash into the global space of the instant biographical hit, constantly creating the need for another shot. This is the frenzied postmodern space that biography has claimed.

Biography used to offer "a premonition of immortality",[34] to use Bauman's words, by bestowing fame. Ironically, in this incarnation, biography offers fame to everyone and so reduces it to nothing:

> Fame [...] has been replaced by notoriety, that icon of contingency, infidelity and the capriciousness of fate. When everyone can have a share of the limelight, no one stays in the limelight forever; but no one is sunk forever in the darkness either. Death, the irrevocable and irreversible event, has been replaced by the disappearance act: the limelight moves elsewhere, but it may always turn, and does turn, the other way. The disappeared are *temporarily absent*; not totally absent, though – they are *technically present*, safely stored in the warehouse of artificial memory, always ready to be resuscitated without much ado and at any moment.[35]

In this scenario there is no concern with "the real" anymore, nor with the special power of personal memory to reconstruct the real, but strangely, as both Bauman and Baudrillard observe, the idea of the real is not entirely abandoned. Instead, it appears to be reasserting itself in new ways. This is the point I now want to follow up in relation to life discourses and postmodernism by briefly sampling several recent hybrid texts that seem to me to various degrees and in different ways to deny the possibility of memory and reality while simultaneously seeking and invoking them. The reason that these texts are important is that they pitch themselves against the banality of the reality show, not by shutting it out or denying its existence, but rather by exploiting it. In doing so they acknowledge, against all "reason", the undeniable power of the story, one's own "true" story – emerging in fragments, drawn from one's own memories, as they have been imprinted on *the body* as well as the page – in no particular order.

What is most true is naked life. [...] I apply myself to seeing the world nude[36]

In the book called 'Fragments: Cool Memories III, 1990-1995', Baudrillard writes that he is at pains to abolish "every last desire to give [his book] a meaning". He hopes, he says, that he has managed to do to his book what "the system has done to reality: turned it into something no one knows what to do with anymore. But", as he goes on to explain, "something they don't know how to get rid of either".[37]

His book attempts to be an empty postmodern auto/biography, playing what he calls the "Great Game" of "speak[ing] of what it is not".[38] This is the reality game, in which he participates by virtue of the fact that he denies that he is

34 Zygmunt Bauman: Postmodernism and Its Discontents, p. 163.
35 Ibid., p. 163.
36 Helene Cixous, Mireille Calle-Gruber: Rootprints, p. 3.
37 Jean Baudrillard: Fragments, p. 140.
38 Ibid., p. 145.

a player. Constructed around tautologies and self-cancelling contradictions the book is nevertheless shot through with intensely personal moments (or, at least, that's how they hit you) of rumination or memory. "There is no corpse of the real, and with good reason", asserts Baudrillard, "The real is not dead, it has disappeared".[39]

If anything, Baudrillard conceals himself even less than does Barthes in 'A Lover's Discourse' (1977),[40] which also carries the word "Fragments" in its title. Both texts play a devious game of revealing and concealing, of having it both ways – one with the experience of love and one with what Baudrillard calls the "obvious fact" of reality. Following a parallel logic, 'Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes' sets up an elaborate anti-autobiographical arsenal but then freely lets in thoughts, reminiscences, and photographs – of himself. He acknowledges a "desire in you to put yourself into it somewhere",[41] and he does put himself in, barely disguised, everywhere.

Another text that expresses the same desire, for understanding and telling the life in some form, is Helene Cixous' 'Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing' (1994), written as a dialogue with Mireille Calle-Gruber. Like 'Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes', but less guardedly, this work is devoted to exploring the relationship between writing and the self. The central question is posed: "How far can I go with it still being I?" A range of possible answers is tested, each of them implying a desire to find a textual framework for letting the experience of "reality" back in. "I have never understood", writes Cixous, "people who pretend that writing is not absolutely indissoluble from a living and complete body. [...] The origin of the material in writing can only be myself". Even though she explains that "I is not I, of course", the tug of the I, as an experiencing body, is felt throughout these dialogues:

> That is my material. Where do I find it? In me and around me [...] that lava that flesh, that blood, those tears.[42]
>
> I am not separate from my writing, I only began to become myself in writing.[43]

The text does not signal a return to faith in realism ("banal realism" is Cixous' declared enemy) but rather a recognition that there has been a more brutal than necessary dismembering of the "I" in postmodernism, and that in spite of this it stubbornly refuses to die and, what's more, it will not stop telling stories.

Could this be an expression of the nostalgia that Jameson refers to in his essay "The Existence of Italy", a nostalgia that he links with a "return to storytelling"?[44]

My final examples of postmodern hybrid narratives in which memory plays a major role are very different from each other. One is Victor Burgin's book 'Venise', and the other is 'No Road' by Australian writer and theorist Stephen Muecke. Both are collections of loosely connected fragments. 'No Road' is a disjointed, ruminative autobiographical record of a journey into the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia. It is also an exploration of the limitations of

39 Ibid., p. 141.
40 Roland Barthes: A Lover's Discourse.
41 Roland Barthes: Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, p. 143.
42 Helene Cixous, Mireille Calle-Gruber: Rootprints, p. 12.
43 Ibid., p. 93.
44 Frederic Jameson: Signatures of the Visible, p. 155.

language, and the gap that words cannot bridge between people, cultures and even one's own memories, "where the words you have brought with you are radically implausible".[45] The narrator's recollections of the Australian landscape and Indigenous people he meets emerge as a series of stories that occasionally touch on experiences that are beyond words. "We sometimes run out of words", writes Muecke", there are no more words left in the place we find ourselves [...] There are also places in the heart where words are lost forever".[46]

In 'Venise' fragmentariness is taken much further, with words playing as forms and shapes against and into the visual images that act as both stage set and story. Each text has its way of getting under your skin. In 'Venise' there is a page that says, "Memories are like dum dum bullets". And it also says,

> Dum dum bullets are projectiles
> with sawn-off points.
> At the point of impact, they leave small,
> insignificant, marks.
> However, after entry,
> they spin
> and tear horrible holes in the flesh.[47]

For 25 years I have been writing down my Ukrainian parents' stories in bits and pieces whenever I have had the chance to visit them in Adelaide. My father is so full of pain when he remembers his father's execution in the village of Rublivka when he was a young child that he breaks down every time and cannot speak, although he badly wants me to write his story. And so I ask, "Tato, tell me about the day your father died".

My notebook records his brief answer:

"Alexander Kerensky was the head of the Russian Provisional Government then. He was a socialist".

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45 Stephen Muecke: No Road, pp. 34 f..
46 Ibid., p. 21.
47 Victor Burgin: Venise, p. 55.

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Fake History, Trauma, and Memory

> Time itself conspires with truth. With time, any old imposture comes to be regarded as truth.[1]
>
> At stake is precisely the 'guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past.[2]

This paper considers two very different cases of intergenerational trauma caused by forced displacement of communities from homelands based on their ethnicity.[3] One relates to the Ukrainian diaspora in Australia, with which I have a connection through my mother and her side of the family in Adelaide and Perth, and the other to the Aboriginal "diaspora" of displaced First Nations people across Australia.[4] Both have a history of communal loss on a massive scale, and in both cases the long-term effects of this history have been intensified by the extraordinary success and resilience of systematic official policies of denial, obliteration, or falsification in official historical records and narratives of the cataclysmic events that forced their displacement.[5] The trauma is thereby rendered invisible to the wider community, causing a second layer of dispossession within the diaspora through the killing of the story of loss and replacing it with a fake story – or silence – or a combination of them working together to establish a widely believed and accepted yet fake history. But within families and across the diaspora, the memories live on – of traumatic events that tell a completely different story. They are passed down in a process described as the "guardianship" within diasporas of "a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection'".[6]

It is in this spirit that I recall my grandfather's memories in this paper. My broader purpose in focussing on two examples of diaspora that demonstrate the resilience of memory in contexts of entrenched denial is to consider how digital

1 Jean Baudrillard: Fragments, p. 8.
2 Eva Hoffman's concept of 'guardianship' as cited in Marianne Hirsch: The Generation of Postmemory, p. 104. The full sentence is, "At stake is precisely the 'guardianship' of a traumatic personal and generational past with which some of us have a 'living connection' and that past's passing into history".
3 The author of this paper is from a Ukrainian family. He is not Indigenous. He acknowledges that entering the worlds of other people's memories is a privilege, and he has his family's permission to draw upon family memories and diaries. Marianne Hirsch's notion of "guardianship" of generational trauma is relevant here (ibid., p. 103).
4 See Rodney Harrison: The Archaeology of "Lost Places", p. 18. James Clifford has also discussed the relevance of the term *diaspora* to dispossessed and displaced Indigenous communities (Diasporas, pp. 307 ff.).
5 The traumatic historical events may have led indirectly to the displacement of the people concerned, as in the case of my mother's family and the Holodomor.
6 "Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Marianne Hirsch: The Generation of Postmemory, p. 103).

technologies have recently been playing a powerful role in breaking open circles of silence and secrecy. In the current "posttruth" era, successes in this arena are especially significant because they run against the grain of the global proliferation of fake news, whose ascendancy has been aided and abetted by the same digital communication technologies. Named the Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year in November 2016, *posttruth* is a term that seems to "capture the times".[7]

The examples that I consider in this paper raise the idea that diasporas, by their very nature as "dwelling-in-displacement"[8] communities (as James Clifford used the term in his 1994 essay "Diasporas"), are particularly well positioned to play a strong role in guarding memories of traumatic events against threats posed by historical denial or other posttruth strategies. This is because diasporas provide dispersed havens for memory outside of the primary danger zone – that is, the home country where fake histories are generated, embedded, and perpetuated. Diaspora is "a culture without a country" (as Baarken and Shelton put it in their 1998 book 'Borders, Exiles, Diasporas').[9]

Stories gain a measure of protection in diasporas because they exist at a distance, in a different geographical space, a different social space – and a different temporal dimension. In diasporas, as James Clifford described them, "here" is imbued with "there", and the present is "constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired but obstructed future".[10]

It is recognised that diaspora and trauma are linked concepts. In his essay "The Diasporic Imaginary", Vijay Mishra considers how "diasporas renegotiate their perceived moment of trauma and how, in the artistic domain, the trauma works itself out".[11] Marianne Hirsch's work on diasporas is centrally concerned with the passing down and maintenance of traumatic stories through the generations. She describes this process in terms of

> mourning for a lost world, the impulse to repair the loss and to heal those who have suffered it, anger about the absence of public recognition [...] in short, the inheritance of a trauma that survives the survivors, overwhelming the present and hijacking the future.[12]

In an interview in 2015, Hirsch talks about how denial of historical events "solidifies bonds rather than loosening them" and "how people in the third generation have gotten even more attached to ancestral histories".[13] The commitment to these histories is, as she reiterates, "a form of care for people and stories that would otherwise fall out of history".[14] In a diaspora, the motivation to protect such stories

7 Lee McIntyre: Post-Truth, p. 1.
8 James Clifford used the hyphenated form *dwelling-in-displacement* in his essay Diasporas (p. 310). Vijay Mishra used the term "diasporic imaginary" to refer to "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously [...] as a group that lives in displacement" (The Diasporic Imaginary, p. 423).
9 Elazar Baarkan, Marie-Denis Shelton: Borders, p. 5.
10 See James Clifford: Diasporas, p. 318.
11 Vijay Mishra: The Diasporic Imaginary, p. 442.
12 Marianne Hirsch: Debts, p. 221.
13 Ayşe Gül Altınay, Andrea Pető: Gender, p. 393.
14 Ibid., p. 392.

is likely to be strengthened rather than undermined by all that threatens them – denial, distance, and time.

There is no doubt that for many diasporic communities the responsibility to safeguard intergenerational stories has been given a boost by digital technologies. Because they are making it easier to collect and curate evidence of historical experiences, digital communication technologies are reconfiguring histories that have been subject to decades or centuries of denial. By forging digital communities, they are also building solidarity across diasporas in ways that have never yet been possible.[15] Most importantly, in doing so they are providing an extendible digital infrastructure for the guardianship and growth of memory repositories for future generations. In fact, the concept of diaspora has been stretched and expanded with the rise of "digital diasporas", which have increased transnational opportunities for practical action in political, economic, and social terms.[16]

Over several decades the term *diaspora*, which in the past referred primarily to the dispersion of Jewish people, has come to be used in relation to almost any community that can be described as "dwelling-in-displacement".[17] Such diasporas are created out of loss, and at the core of the idea of diaspora, as it is used here, is the memory of trauma.

The two examples that I focus on in this paper have in common the fact that both are concerned with violent histories that have been described in terms of genocide. In both cases the long-term suppression of the histories has not extinguished the memories of the catastrophic events that led to banishment or escape from home. Guarded and protected by the displaced individuals, families, and communities, the memories of the violent events create a substratum of circulating histories where unresolved pain and anger accumulate.

It is remarkable how strongly such memories are retained in diasporas, often aided by photographs, letters, diaries, and objects from home.[18] But as we enter the third decade of this century, we are witnessing the extinction of many of these kinds of objects in an increasingly virtual and "thingless" digital memory world. Diasporas are themselves at a transitional moment as they face the losses – and reap the benefits – of digital transformation.

15 Hirsch describes this as "forging a digital community of what Eva Hoffman has termed the 'postgenerations'. That community shares the many dimensions of postmemory I've myself experienced and analyzed in the art and writing of those who came 'after'" (Debts, p. 221).

16 See Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff: Digital Diasporas.

17 See James Clifford: Diasporas, pp. 245, 254; see also Elazar Baarkan, Marie-Denis Shelton: Borders, p. 5; Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff: Digital Diasporas, p. 3.

18 Janet Hoskins: Biographical Objects. Describing her ethnographic work, she writes, "I could not collect the histories of objects and the life histories of persons separately. People and the things they valued were so complexly intertwined they could not be disentangled" (ibid., p. 2).

Holodomor and the Ukrainian Diaspora

> We learned to live quietly, accept that we had to give up our food when necessary, accept that everything can change, moment by moment. We trusted no one and lived in fear.[19]

I want to now turn to my family's experience of an event in the 1930s that inflicted trauma on a massive scale in Ukraine and marked the beginning of the sequence of events that led eventually to their resettlement in Australia. My late grandfather Petro Olijnyk was born in Ukraine in 1911, six years before the Bolshevik Revolution, and lived there until forced to leave during World War II. In 1949 he came to Adelaide, South Australia, as a Displaced Person and postwar refugee with his wife, Nadia, their three children, and his mother-in-law. He was thirty-eight years old, and his youngest child – my mother, Kateryna – was five years old. From the time of my childhood, whenever I visited my Ukrainian grandparents' home, he would tell and retell his stories of life in Ukraine under Stalin and then in wartime of the forced labour camps in Hitlerite Germany where he was a prisoner. There were countless times, over a period of twenty-five years, when I would sit at the kitchen table with my mother in the small family house in a suburb of Adelaide, listening to these stories. They were delivered emphatically, with passion and drama, often with reference to a small collection of old documents and photographs. Sometimes my grandfather's narrative would break down under the weight of the emotional experience of remembering and retelling. Only in the final years, towards the time of his death in 2005, did I recognise that these narratives were driven not only by a desire to protect and pass on an endangered history but also by deep posttraumatic stress.

The most painful to recall for him were the stories of his family's experience of the great famine (Holodomor) of 1932-1933 that was engineered by Stalin across Ukraine and that has now been recognised by many countries as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people. He and his family experienced it directly in rural Rublivka where he spent his childhood. What distressed him as much as the memories themselves were the silence and international denial that had wiped out these cataclysmic events from world history.[20] It is not surprising then that in social situations Petro Olijnyk, who was a highly qualified engineer, was laughed at and dismissed as ignorant and crazy when he tried to inform colleagues in the workplace even in the most superficial way about the Holodomor. According to the Australian Government it simply did not happen. And so, engulfed by his traumatic memories, my grandfather was driven to recount them compulsively to his family.

Although this act was deeply personal, in telling the stories he was going through a process of testimony that had implications far beyond personal

19 Petro Olijnyk, excerpt from my mother's simultaneous translation and transcription of his memories of village life in Rublivka, Ukraine, as told to her at his home in Adelaide, South Australia, 4 July 1995, recorded in Kateryna Olijnyk Longley's green notebook labelled Mum and Tato Stories 1990-1995.

20 See Lesa Melnyczuk: Silent Memories.

necessity and can be seen to apply in the contexts of other silenced histories that have been kept alive within diasporas.[21] My grandfather was actively protecting a threatened history by embedding his memories in an oral family narrative in the hope that it might be passed down in the absence of any public acknowledgement of the communal trauma. In the relative political safety of Australia, he was also putting life into a political history that was enveloped in a worldwide blanket of silence and whose best chance of survival seemed to be via the diaspora. At the same time, telling his stories served his psychological need to narrate the past so that he could give shape to his own life and provide it with meaning. "Self-narration", writes Paul John Eakin, "is the defining act of the human subject".[22] Regardless of how many times he delivered the same stories, it was clear to me that while the process did not provide closure for him, it was undoubtedly cathartic.[23]

At a 1990 conference on Ukrainian settlement in Australia, where the importance of the oral tradition among displaced refugees in Australia was highlighted, narratives of this kind were described as

> private stories of intense suffering, humiliation, exclusion from all possible worlds, stories so painful that they may be untellable even now except in the security of immediate family or deeply trusted friends. They have not yet been transformed into acceptable fictions. To tell them is almost to relive them.[24]

In retrospect, I can see that the pain of reliving the stories that related to the Holodomor was made especially intense because they were not believed in the host country. My grandfather's memories were pitched against what is now known to be an enormous cover-up, generated by the Soviet Union but accepted and maintained across the world for decades despite the vast numbers of survivors who were victims or witnesses. It seems remarkable now that such a massive event – causing many millions of deaths[25] – could be kept hidden for so long. How was that possible? How could it have been forgotten even though outside of Ukraine it had been well publicised and well known at the time?[26] How could the world so quickly forget?[27] Numerous answers to this question have been offered,[28] but

21 See Marianne Hirsch's comments in Ayşe Gül Altınay, Andrea Pető: Gender, Memory and Connective Genocide Scholarship, p. 388: "I do believe that the Holocaust has provided an enormously powerful template and point of reference in the field of genocide studies and to the work of memory and forgetting of other kinds of atrocities".

22 Paul John Eakin: How Our Lives Become Stories, p. 21.

23 As Boris Drožđek explains in Voices of Trauma, "Feeling relieved after verbally expressing the distress due to traumatic experiences seems to be a universal phenomenon" (The Rebirth of Contextual Thinking in Psychotraumatology, p. 17).

24 Kateryna Olijnyk Longley quoted in Marko Pavlyshyn: Ukrainian Settlement in Australia, pp. 129 f.

25 Estimates vary between losses of 1.8 million and 15 million people, and the true total seems impossible to know. See, for example, the discussion at Gennadiy Yefimenko, So How Many Ukrainians Died in the Holodomor?

26 Numerous newspaper articles from the time leave no doubt that the West was fully aware.

27 In 1954 George Orwell drew attention to this extraordinary phenomenon of mass forgetting in his essay Notes on Nationalism: "Huge events like the Ukraine famine of 1933, involving the deaths of millions of people, have actually escaped the attention of the majority of English Russophiles"(England Your England, pp. 52 f.).

28 See, for example, Nicole Loroff, Jordan Vincent, Valentina Kuryliw: 'Holodomor – Denial and Silences: "There are numerous reasons that help explain the lack of awareness by the

the primary one is "outright denial", involving cover-ups and what we would now call "fake news".[29]

Because the story of the famine had no official existence, it was routinely dismissed as fantasy by listeners who had no connection with the original events. This amounted to a second layer of killing – the killing of the *story* of the killing. All around the world Ukrainians were individually remembering and retelling in shreds and fragments a history that was pitted against the power of worldwide official silence and denial. In the diaspora, notably through the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, recognition grew.[30] More than eighty years after it happened, the Holodomor had been recognised as an act of genocide by many countries, and by the United Nations.[31] Digital communication technologies have facilitated this recognition, enabling transnational solidarity across the global Ukrainian diaspora. They have hugely enhanced the speed, efficiency, and scope of the collecting and recording of evidence. They have also provided an open-ended space for memories to enter and to interact with other people's memories. In 2014 the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium was established as a project of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies. Memorials are being built – physical and digital – around which communities of remembering are growing. I am now able to look online at images of my grandfather's hometown, see photographs taken by journalists at the time, and hear accounts of the Holodomor as it is remembered by the children of people he may have known. The silence has been broken, and this buried history has become mainstream.

However, denial still goes on, as this extract from an article in the Russian 'Sputnik News' from 2015 attests. Its heading is "Josef Stalin Holodomor Hoax", and the text reads,

> A monument to the so-called Ukrainian "Holodomor", one of the 20th century's most famous myths and vitriolic pieces of anti-Soviet Propaganda, has been erected in the US capital [...]. Alas, even repeated a thousand times a lie will never become the truth.[32]

Ironically, this last sentence could serve as the Ukrainian diaspora's own motto in its battle against fake history.

public of the Holodomor and why this genocidal famine remained relatively unknown and unacknowledged until the late 1980s".

29 "The Soviet government refused offers of international aid [to Ukraine] from the Red Cross and other groups on the grounds that there was no Famine. Soviet foreign minister, Maxim Litvinov, publicly denied the existence of Famine in the USSR in 1933. Discussion of Famine, or its causes were forbidden in the Soviet press, and once the Famine was over no references were made to it in Soviet historical accounts. Moreover, citizens of the USSR were forced into silence on this issue for over half a century. "Disinformation: by camouflaging the extent of the Ukrainian Famine as just 'food difficulties', Soviet authorities mixed small amounts of truth into their denial, thus making it more difficult to figure out what was actually happening" (ibid., p. 1).

30 See Serge Cipko: Holodomor and Canada's Response.

31 Holodomor Museum: Worldwide Recognition of the Holodomor as Genocide.

32 The article, written by Ekaterina Blinova, continues with: "Although the 'Holodomor' myth was never based upon credible evidence and there are enough authentic sources to prove that it is a hoax, it is simply taken for granted. Unsurprisingly, Washington supports the myth as a part of its recent Cold War-style anti-Russian campaign. Alas, even repeated a thousand times a lie will never become the truth".

Denial, despite a wealth of irrefutable evidence and worldwide testimony, is a prevalent feature of contemporary historical reconstruction and of media reporting more generally. It continues in relation to events, including, for example, China's long-term denial of the Tiananmen Square massacre of over thirty years ago,[33] and in the recent Facebook-fuelled genocide in Myanmar.[34] Battles between opposing versions of history continue to be played out around the world.

Aboriginal Counter-Histories

> This is how Australia makes us feel. Estranged from the land of our ancestors, marooned by the tides of history.[35]

This section focuses on my second example, where the trauma inflicted on a mass scale on First Nations Australians has also been compounded by denial. In his groundbreaking Boyer Lectures of 1968,[36] a year after the 1967 referendum that allowed Aboriginal people to be recognised as citizens of Australia for the first time, anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner coined the phrase "the great Australian Silence". His key message was that Aboriginal people were almost entirely absent from Australian historical narratives, and that *their* histories needed to be written to tell the other side of the story. He refers to Peter Coleman's book 'Australian Civilization', published in 1962, as just one example among many he had examined of a scholarly historical text where there is "total silence on all matters aboriginal". Further,

> [a] partial survey is enough to let me make the point that inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape.[37]

Stanner used the influential platform of the Boyer Lectures to attempt to break that pattern by drawing upon Aboriginal memories and perspectives to develop a counter-history. Over subsequent decades there was a rising wave of interest in "the other side of the story" and signs that a cultural shift was occurring – but this was happening more in the areas of academic research, education, and artistic production than in the general community.[38] The entrenched, deeply racist colonial narrative held its ground. It appeared to be unshaken by counter-histories that called its most basic premises into question. As recently as 2015 at an Australian Rules football match, an incident occurred that brought this dramatically

33 See ABC TV Four Corners program on the thirtieth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, 3 June 2019.
34 See Paul Mozur: A Genocide Incited on Facebook.
35 Stan Grant: Talking to My Country, pp. 216 f.
36 Willam E. H. Stanner: 1968 Boyer Lectures. Robert Manne referred to one of the lectures, The Great Australian Silence, as the "most consequential lecture ever broadcast on the ABC". See Robert Manne: Introduction, p. 1.
37 Willam E. H. Stanner: 1968 Boyer Lectures, pp. 24 f.
38 As well as formal histories, there were novels, reports, story collections, biographies, and autobiographies, as well as films, plays, academic articles, and books focussing on Aboriginal experience – and universities began to offer Aboriginal studies courses.

into the open.[39] Aboriginal journalist and writer Stan Grant talked about it a year later in his now-famous 'Australian Dream' speech:

> Thousands of voices rose to hound an Indigenous man. A man who was told he wasn't Australian. A man who was told he wasn't Australian of the Year. And they hounded that man into submission.
>
> I can't speak for what lay in the hearts of the people who booed Adam Goodes. But I can tell you what we heard when we heard those boos. We heard a sound that was very familiar to us. We heard a howl. We heard a howl of humiliation that echoes across two centuries of dispossession, injustice, suffering and survival. We heard the howl of the Australian Dream, and it said to us again: you're not welcome.[40]

Aboriginal people across Australia can be considered in the same terms as other kinds of diaspora because they are dwelling-in-displacement in communities that are as dispersed and fractured and removed from home as any group that has relocated to a foreign country. Indigeneity and diaspora have been linked in the past, and it is particularly useful to do so in the context of historical denial.[41] Obviously there are fundamental differences and complexities, including the fact that there were more than 250 Indigenous languages spoken in Australia representing over 500 clan groups or "nations".[42] My intention is not to conflate the very different experiences of historical dispossession discussed in this paper, and yet the parallels in terms of dual histories are real and significant in the broader context of diaspora and trauma.

In Australia there continue to be two distinct narratives of colonial settlement that exist antagonistically side by side. They represent clashing and irreconcilable versions of Australia's history. Every day in newspapers, on television, in parliamentary debates, in conversations, this clash of stories is plain to see.

Standing in the most heavily used public park in my home city of Fremantle is a statue that provides a stunning visual expression of this clash. On the face of its traditional stone pedestal, there are two plaques, one above the other. The first plaque was installed in 1913 as a memorial to three white explorers (apparently) "murdered" in 1864 by "treacherous natives" and to honour the pastoralist who was the "intrepid leader" of the subsequent "search and punitive party":

> This monument was erected [...] as a [...] tribute to the memories of Painter, Harding and Goldwyer. Earliest explorers after Grey and Gregory of this "terra incognita". Attacked at night by the treacherous natives they were murdered at Boola Boola near La Grange Bay on the 13th November 1864.[43]

39 For an account of the incident see Michael Safi: AFL Great Adam Goodes Is Being Booed across Australia.

40 Stan Grant: The Australian Dream, p. 2.

41 Writing in the American context about First Nation peoples in terms of diaspora, James Clifford made the point that "dispersed tribal peoples, those who have been dispossessed of their lands [...] may claim diasporic identities" (Diasporas, p. 253). It is in this sense that I use the term in relation to Indigenous people in Australia.

42 See https://info.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people.

43 The full text reads, "This monument was erected by CJ Brockman as a fellow bush wanderer's tribute to the memories of Painter, Harding and Goldwyer. Earliest explorers after Grey and Gregory of this 'terra incognita'. Attacked at night by the treacherous natives they were murdered at Boola Boola near La Grange Bay on the 13th November 1864. Also, as an appreciative token of remembrance of Maitland Brown one of the pioneer pastoralists and a premier politician of this state. Intrepid leader of the government search and punitive party. His remains together with the sad relics of the ill fated three recovered with great

The second plaque installed eighty-one years later in 1994 is a memorial to "around twenty" Aboriginal people who died at the same event but were not mentioned in the first account:[44]

> This plaque was erected by people who found the monument before you offensive. The monument describes the events at La Grange from one perspective only, the view point of the white "settlers". No mention is made of the right of Aboriginal people to defend their land or of the history of provocation which led to the explorers' deaths. The "punitive party" mentioned here ended in the deaths of somewhere around twenty Aboriginal people. The whites were well-armed and equipped. Lest We Forget Mapa Jarriya Nyalaku.[45]

This duality is also being played out at many other locations, including the site of the Pinjarra massacre near Perth, also known as the Battle of Pinjarra. In 1834, Governor Stirling led an attack that resulted in the deaths of fifteen to seventy Aboriginal people. The nature of the still-unresolved clash between the two histories of this event is encapsulated in the two competing terms: "massacre" and "battle". In her essay "Memorials and Trauma: Pinjarra, 1834", Jennifer Harris comments,

> For the descendants of the 1834 Binjareb people and their supporters, the event could not be further from a battle. It is a place known through oral history as an infamous "massacre" site in which, in the historically debated absence of the young Binjareb warriors [...] mostly women, children and the old died in a disgraceful ambush which all but destroyed their society and has carried intergenerational trauma.[46]

At a gathering that marked the 180th anniversary in 2014, the comments of local Indigenous people were reported by the ABC News, including those of senior elder Harry Nannup, who said, "There was no battle. It was just plain murder [...]. Our people were cut down with high-powered rifles".[47] Two plaques at the memorial site have been vandalised, which has been attributed to underlying tensions in the Pinjarra community arising from these conflicting Indigenous and non-Indigenous versions of history. A commemorative monument stands nearby – without a plaque – because the local government could not agree on which terminology to use. Attitudes have only slowly started to change in the past year.[48]

risk and danger from lone wilds repose under a public monument in the East Perth Cemetery. Lest We Forget".

44 See Vanessa Mills, Ben Collins: The Controversial Statue That Was Added To.

45 The coexistence of the two plaques on the same monument has also been commented on positively as evidence of reconciliation.

46 Jennifer Harris: Memorials and Trauma, p. 2.

47 Laura Gartry: Noongar Community Opens Cultural Centre.

48 In 2008 Jennifer Harris wrote, "So very far are some parts of the Pinjarra population from confronting the past that in December 1998 the Shire of Murray took the extraordinary step of voting on a motion which was carried eight to two stating that the Council does not recognise the word 'massacre' and that the area must be known as 'Battle of Pinjarra Memorial Area'". Despite protests, at the time of writing the Council had not rescinded the resolution. However, as reported in The West Australian in 2020, it appears that attitudes are finally changing. Shire of Murray Council president David Bolt said, "Council acknowledges the region's dark history, recognising Pinjarra Massacre as the correct and appropriate reference to the site and will continue to support the Bindjareb people and First Australians with undertakings that assist their spiritual healing" (Steve Butler: Bush Legends).

Hundreds of places across Australia are known to be sites of mass killings of the original inhabitants. In his "Australian Dream" speech, Stan Grant describes the experience of his own antecedents:

> I came from a people west of the Blue Mountains – the Wiradjuri people – where in the 1820s the soldiers and settlers waged a war of extermination against my people.
>
> Yes, a war of extermination! This was the language used at the time [...]. Martial law was declared and my people could be shot on sight. Those rugged mountain ranges – my people, women, and children, were herded over those ranges to their deaths.
>
> The Australian Dream
>
> [...] Captain Arthur Phillip, a man of enlightenment, a man who was instructed to make peace with the so-called natives, in a matter of years, was sending out raiding parties with the instruction, "Bring back the severed heads of the black troublemakers". [...]
>
> Every time we are lured into the light, we are mugged by the darkness of this country's history.[49]

It is well known that the concept of 'terra nullius' and the consequent lack of any negotiation or treaty with the Aboriginal inhabitants gave licence to the colonisers to take their land, rob them of their human rights, and exclude them for almost two centuries from the basic privileges of citizenship. But until recently it has not been well known that settlers carried out mass killings of Aboriginal people at hundreds of sites across the land.

A remarkable and groundbreaking interactive digital research project – the Colonial Frontier Massacres Map[50] – is now bringing this history finally into full view and enabling a wealth of information about mass colonial killings to become easily accessible to the public. Launched by the University of Newcastle, Australia, in 2017, it continues to be added to with new sites and evidence. A subset of data from this project has been incorporated into a digital display covering Western Australia in the newly opened WA Museum Boola Bardip.[51] The effect of this Australia-wide project, which is still growing and unfolding, is to validate neglected Aboriginal histories, site by site, by uncovering and incorporating evidence that disrupts and unravels the settlers' story of colonisation. The project does this by building a different composite story. The fact that this story is being generated in another space – that of the internet – gives it a different character from any other form of Aboriginal history. It thereby effectively bypasses ideological deadlocks and head-on collisions – of the kind exemplified by the Fremantle or the Pinjarra memorials – by enabling any number of stories to coexist and to be shared across interconnected, reconfigured diasporas. Its wide reach across vast spaces, through past generations and into living communities, promises to make this project one of the most extensive and disruptive counter-histories produced in Australia.[52] Memories that descendants of

49 Stan Grant: The Australian Dream, pp. 2 f.

50 See Centre for 21st-Century Humanities: Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia, 1780 to 1930. The yellow dots show the location of killings of Aboriginal people, and the blue dots show where non-Indigenous people were killed.

51 Opened in late 2020, see https://visit.museum.wa.gov.au/boolabardip/.

52 See Bridget Brennan: Map of Indigenous Massacres Grows to Include More Sites. As historian Lyndall Ryan, who has been working on mapping massacre sites, explains in Brennan's article, "The oral sources are very important because they can identify the names of

Aboriginal massacre victims and witnesses have held and protected through successive generations now have a receptive, communal place to reside. The massacre map is not a formal structure for truth-telling of the kind that the "Uluru Statement from the Heart" asks for – a set of proposals delivered to the Australian Government by a group of Indigenous leaders in 2017, which ended with a call for Australia's First Nations peoples to be heard and for "truth-telling about our history":

> We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.
>
> In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard.[53]

Nor does it address the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the Australian constitution, but there is much that it can do. The map has the capacity to draw "Australians all" into a fresh space, where the storytelling playing field is levelled and where stories and fragments of stories can enter safely – one by one, voice by voice, site by site – to generate a composite historical narrative. While its structure allows it to accommodate multiple perspectives, the massacre map publishes hard evidence in the form of numbers, names, and remembered details, protecting the stories against outright denial.

The massacre map provides a repository, but it is also a new and powerful kind of storyteller that has the potential to build solidarity across the diverse Indigenous diaspora – following the pattern established by digital technologies of linking diasporas across geographical, cultural, and linguistic borders – around the globe.[54] The map appears to have provided a significant boost to one dimension of that process of truth-telling by providing a safe public space for sharing and validating traumatic histories that have been maintained in the past through private storytelling rituals within families and small groups. Yet, as with all digital innovation, the benefits also bring dangers. The digital tools that boost truth-telling are the same as those on which fake news thrives. Nevertheless, large-scale digital repositories of the stories of a diaspora have immensely more power to expose historical distortions and deletions than do private memories, no matter how carefully kept and preserved. This is largely because they exist in a nonhuman space, yet their integrity is totally dependent on human factors: on the individuals and policies that guard the gates of each archive and on the source of funding that assures its maintenance and survival.

Further, like the outsourcing of memory to digital photographs, emails, and social media, digital collection and storage *elsewhere* is a mixed blessing. It is acknowledged that the treasured personal objects of the predigital world – photographs, letters, things – carried memories and meaning in ways that any amount of digital abundance cannot match. And so, as I acknowledge the crucial role that digital technologies have played in the two examples I have talked about here,

people who were the particular perpetrators, they can identify the particular groups that were the victims of the massacre, they can give us more information about the actual site".

53 Uluru Statement: The Uluru Statement from the Heart.

54 Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff makes the point, "As a tool for communication and community building among dispersed populations, the Internet is ideally suited for connecting diasporans who are geographically scattered and removed from their homeland" (Digital Diasporas, p. 12).

I think of my Ukrainian family's tradition of oral storytelling about their home country and my mother's treasure trove of old, messy handwritten notebooks filled with scraps of transcribed memories – and feel that the enormity of the losses is something that we are only just beginning to grasp. A digital miracle of our era is the capacity we have to create, keep, and share simulacra of personal treasures via the now taken-for-granted tools on our phones: WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook, Instagram, and others. My mother chats via Skype with young relatives in Ukraine, but she says there is less and less to chat about. The stories that were kept alive in the diaspora may well be dead or irrelevant in the home country.

Diasporas have been defined by distance and separation from home. But with the revolution in global communication and travel, distance has been compressed and reimagined. The online space of the internet swallows up diasporas into one gargantuan new "home". Diaspora* is now the name of an alternative social media platform.[55] When everything and everyone can be anywhere, and place and space as we knew them have been transformed or abolished, then the idea of diaspora is in danger of being either negated or absorbed by the internet itself. In this way, for all the positive promise they hold, it may be that the digital technologies that have empowered and come to the aid of diasporas in the ways that I have described in this paper are also diminishing the capacity of diasporas to act as distant safe havens for the guardianship of memories and histories in a posttruth world.

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55 See Diaspora*: https://diasporafoundation.org.

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Biological Warfare in North America and Australia

Smallpox and Colonial Violence

Discourses

A specter is haunting the history of Australia's European colonialization, the specter of biological warfare against Aboriginal Australians in New South Wales in 1788/1789. Several historians have either declared it a myth or have dismissed the idea because of the apparent lack of hard, i.e., written evidence. Only a few historians embrace the idea of biocide by smallpox.[1] New evidence suggests that those who argue that the British military engaged in genocidal colonial biowarfare are justified. In this contribution, I will discuss the discourses that accompanied, prepared, and justified the genocidal activities of white settlers. I will then examine Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians' willful infection with the variola virus by applying criminologists' definitions of sufficient evidence. Finally, I will show how smallpox has been used as a biological weapon in North America before turning to Australia.

Before discussing this evidence, one should raise broader questions that define the event horizon of such an intentional smallpox infection. Which discourses about Indigenous populations were common in colonial societies of the late 18th and early 19th centuries? The practices of killing and infecting, stealing land from, and raping Indigenous people required rationalization because they took place outside of the accustomed legal and religious order. In any case, the killing of Indigenous people was punished only in exceptional cases. Instead, the murder and robbery of Indigenous people lay within that realm of the "state of exception", constitutive for determining state sovereignty. Aboriginal Australians thus did not belong to the citizenry and had nothing except their corporeality: In Giorgio Agamben's terminology, they had become "homines sacri", the people who possess nothing but their bare life who may be killed with impunity.[2]

Thus, the abject descriptions of Indigenous Australians and their alleged depravity direct our gaze at their corporeality as a site of exclusion. What was the nature of these justifications that accompanied the practice of killing Indigenous populations and taking their land? There have been colonial discourses in North America and Australia that structured the knowledge and power of disposition

1 See Ann M. Becker: Smallpox at the Siege of Boston; Judy Campbell: Invisible Invaders; Elizabeth A. Fenn: Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America; Elizabeth A. Fenn: Pox Americana; Norbert Finzsch: Die Frühgeschichte der biologischen Kriegsführung im 18. Jahrhundert; David R. Petriello: Bacteria, Bayonets; Philip Ranlet: The British, Slaves, and Smallpox in Revolutionary Virginia; James C. Riley: Smallpox and American Indians Revisited; Christopher Warren: Could First Fleet Smallpox Infect Aborigines.

2 Giorgio Agamben: The Omnibus Homo sacer, pp. 10 f.

over Indigenous populations. I am not suggesting here that there was merely one discourse of exclusion. Instead, the discourses were multivocal. Discourses, especially toward the end of the 18th century, were characterized by "murmuring".[3] I will focus here on the voices of "primitivism" or "savagization",[4] which were paradigmatic in colonial discourse until the invention of scientific racism in the second half of the 19th century.[5] George L. Mosse has given a simple but lucid definition: "Racism was a visual ideology based upon stereotypes. That was one of its main strengths".[6] However, racism is more than just an ideology as "necessary false consciousness". There is more than just one form of racism – it has a plural.[7]

> Racisms differ, among other things, in that they are directed outward or inward from society, invoke religious or racial constructs, or are directed against indigenous populations or affect enslaved or immigrant lower classes. They also differ according to their cultural environment and its history.[8]

It is necessary to add that racisms are also social practices reiterated in discourses and dispositives. Michel Foucault notes that these practices "systematically form the objects of which they speak".[9] Racisms involve promoting exclusions, or the actual exclusion of people due to their assumed membership in racial groups, independent of their definition. Racists explicitly or implicitly ascribe 'racial' characteristics of others that ostensibly differ from their group. These ascriptions do not merely propose 'racial' differences; they must also assign 'racial' preferences or "explain" 'racial' differences as natural, inevitable, and therefore unchangeable, or express desired, intended, or actual inclusions or exclusions, entitlements or restrictions.

In the Australian case, a visual ideology and a social practice built on stereotypes and discourses – the appearance and aesthetics of people – would justify exclusion, violence, the taking of the land, and the killing of Aboriginal Australians. This aesthetic racism had nothing to do with immutable biological characteristics because what ultimately distinguished the alleged races was culture, not biology. Wulf D. Hund has characterized different forms of racist social exclusion, of which most are not based on "race" in a symbolic representation (Fig. 1).[10]

According to this graph, Aboriginal Australians were classified in the fields of barbarization and savagization equally. Aboriginal Australians appear in Australian sources from 1788 to 1850 as "heathen", "lazy", "ugly", and "uncivilized" "cannibals" who humiliate and torture their women. In particular, women were denied any power of attraction, yet they were considered "libidinous" and "licentious". These "primitive savages" would not even own the land they settled on, which would be evident from the fact that they did not own plows. They would allegedly disregard property and live as hunter-gatherers, the lowest level

3 Michel Foucault: History, Discourse and Discontinuity, pp. 236, 248.
4 Wulf D. Hund: A Historical Materialist Theory of Racism, n. pag.
5 See Norbert Finzsch: Wissenschaftlicher Rassismus in den Vereinigten Staaten.
6 George L. Mosse: Toward the Final Solution, p. xv.
7 Norbert Finzsch: Conditions of Intolerance, p. 14.
8 Wulf D. Hund: Rassimus und Antirassismus, p. 14 (my translation).
9 Michel Foucault: The Archaeology of Knowledge, p. 54; see also Stefanie Affeldt, Wulf D. Hund: Conflicts in Racism; Wulf D. Hund: Rassismus und Antirassismus.
10 Wulf D. Hund: A Historical Materialist Theory of Racism, n. pag.

of human development. Their number would decrease rapidly. They would be doomed to extinction. Their languages did not deserve this designation because of their alleged lack of linguistic sophistication. All these attributed characteristics taken together amount to build up an image of inhuman others.[11]

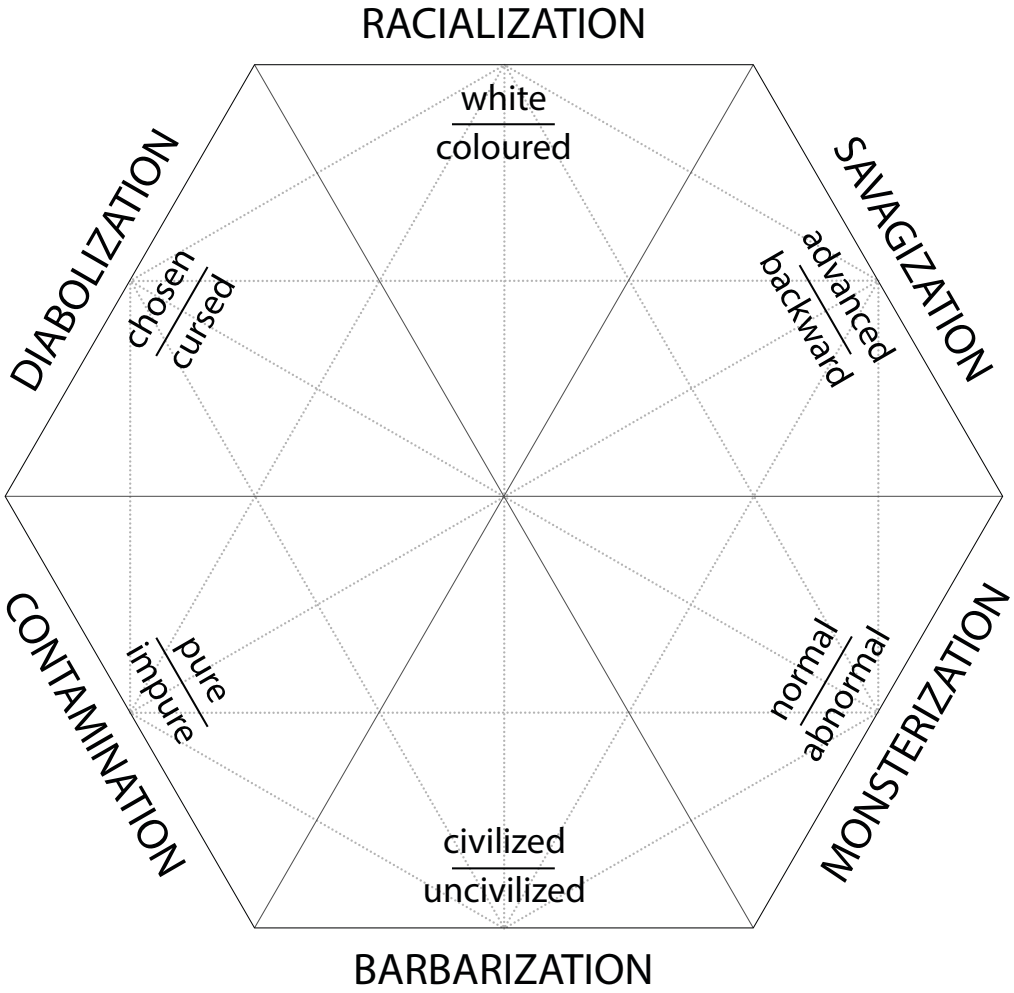

Fig. 1: Forms of racist social exclusion

Before acts of violence and destruction can be committed, perpetrators and inactive observers must agree that victims are outside the realm of punitive intervention by state power. Victims of genocidal acts have to be – by definition – subhuman or non-human. Thus, perpetrators must develop a common taxonomy of the primitive so that Indigenous peoples in Australia – as well as in North America appear worthless, uncivilized, and inhuman. I will emphasize again that this has by no means been the only form of interaction with Indigenous people: instead, there has been interaction, mutual economic dependence, and communal living between Europeans and Indigenous people, but the crucial question

11 See Norbert Finzsch: Discourses of Genocide; Norbert Finzsch: It is scarcely possible to conceive that human beings could be so hideous and loathsome.

remains how land grabbing and displacement of Indigenous people would have been possible had they not been built on a form of dislocation that had physical violence against Aboriginal Australians in tow. I will attempt to trace this discourse on the character traits attributed to Indigenous people. Notably, such statements were always linked to aesthetic judgments and supposed truths about Indigenous societies. This dispositive of racism was also applicable outside of Australia; indeed, it had been in effect even before Australia's settlement in 1788. It had been developed and tested on the example of North American Indians and inhabitants of Africa. This knowledge had long since burst the narrow confines of the small colony in Sydney insofar as it constitutes general knowledge of the time. In many respects, the discovery of Aboriginal people was nothing other than the "rediscovery" of the Africans or the Indians on Australian soil.

The necessity of waging war with biological weapons against the Aboriginal Australians no longer arose after the crisis of 1788/89 had been overcome. Although they resisted their land's creeping seizure through open military resistance, guerrilla tactics, sabotage, and refusal to work, they could not stem the tide of whites' increasingly rapid colonization of their land. Enlightenment thinking prepared and justified land seizures. This early racism did not require biology as a leading science to be successful. Instead, it made use of value judgments about Indigenous communities, which were classified as "inferior", "inhuman", and "ugly", based on various axes of judgment and thus denied the right to exist.

One of these registers of evaluation was religion or the question of whether Indians had a developed faith at all. Indigenous people in North America and Aboriginal Australians were fundamentally denied the ability to practice religion. They were portrayed as "devil worshippers" and "idolaters", although such derogatory judgments about Aboriginal Australians were rare. Among the few pronouncements in the field of Indigenous religion, however, we find those, such as Watkin Tench's from 1788, that summarizes the European view quite well:

> The question of, whether they believe in the immortality of the soul, will take up very little time to answer. They are universally fearful of spirits. They Call a spirit mawn. They often scruple to approach a corpse, saying that the mawn will seize them and that it fastens upon them in the night when asleep. When asked where their deceased friends are they always point to the skies. To believe in after existence is to confess the immortality of some part of being. To enquire whether they assign a 'limited' period to such future State would be superfluous.[12]

Compare this assessment with the later condemnation by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, comparing the psyche of "primitive peoples" with that of neurotics, written in 1912:

> The Australian aborigines [...] do not build houses or permanent shelters; they do not cultivate the soil; they keep no domesticated animals except the dog; [...] It is highly doubtful whether any religion in the shape of a worship of higher beings can be attributed to them. [...] We should certainly not expect that the sexual life of these poor naked cannibals would be moral in our sense or that their sexual instincts would be subjected to any great degree of restriction.[13]

12 Tim Flannery: Two Classic Tales of Australian Exploration, pp. 25 f.
13 Sigmund Freud: Totem and Taboo, p. 2.

The longevity of the topos of the Aboriginal Australians' lack of religion becomes apparent. Another discursive field in which Indians and Aboriginal Australians fare poorly according to their white observers is labor. According to Enlightenment developmental theory, hunter-gatherers were far below manufacturing and trading Europeans and differed little from animals. The American historian William Robertson had emphasized that North American Indians were inferior to Europeans because they allegedly did not farm.[14] This argument predicts that Indians would soon become extinct because of their lack of work ethic. Similar reasoning is found when assessing the Aboriginal Australians' will to work. This assumed lack of work ethic is often combined with the primitiveness of their dwellings. Again, this assessment's longevity is proven in Sigmund Freud's condemnation of Aboriginal Australians as "savages" in the quotation above. Since North American and Australian Indigenous peoples, according to their observers, were either abject savages or remained at the lowest level of human development, they could not build civilization and government:

> We may, I think, in a great measure impute their low State of civilization, and deficiency in the mechanical arts, to the nature of the country they inhabit, the kind of life they lead, and the mode of government they live under. Civilization depends more upon the circums[tan]ces under which man is placed than upon any innate impulse of his own,— the natural inclinations of man tending toward the savage State, or that in which food is procured With the least possible effort; [...] In primitive communities, generally speaking, the chiefs must be hereditary, and must have acquired power to control the Others, before much improvement can take Place; When, if these chiefs exercise their power With justice, and secure the inviolability of persons and property, industry will soon be encouraged, and various useful arts originated. [...] The North American tribes form an apt illustration of these observations, – the chiefs being mere advisers, as it were, possessing no power to enforce their counsel, and consequently no means of breaking up the Old savage habits of the tribes, and impelling them onward in the path of civilization.[15]

The disdain for Indigenous labor and work capacity has, in turn, been linked to other fields of discourse, most notably ethics, gender relations, and sexuality. Morally, Indians and Aboriginal Australians are portrayed as devious, cowardly, and mendacious, despite the efficacy of the image of the "noble savage", with recurring accusations that they were thieves.

> Shortly after this, eight of the women, whom we had not before noticed, came down to the water side, and gave us the most pressing invitation to land. Indeed they played their part uncommonly well, and tried for some time to allure us by the most unequivocal manifestations of love. Hopkinson however who always had his eyes about him, observed the spears of the men among the reeds. They kept abreast of us as we pulled up the stream, and, no doubt, were anticipating our inability to resist the temptations they had thrown in our way. I was really provoked at their barefaced treachery, and should most undoubtedly have attacked them, had they not precipitately retreated on being warned by the women that I was arming my men, which I had only now done upon seeing such strong manifestations of danger.[16]

14 William Robertson: Dr. Robertson's History of America, pp. 224 ff.; William Robertson: The History of America in Three Volumes, pp. 6 ff.
15 Peter Miller Cunningham: Two Years in New South Wales, vol 2, pp. 46 f., 49 f.
16 Charles Napier Sturt: Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia, p. 194.

The discourse ascribing low morals to Indigenous peoples attributed one-sided gender relations to Indigenous people in which men violently dominated women. The trope of the Aboriginal Australians' sexual deviance, who were repeatedly accused of wife-swapping and prostitution, fits in with this assessment:

> One of the surest marks of the low position of the Australian savage in the scale of the human species, is the treatment of their women. The men walk along with a proud and majestic air; behind them, crouching like slaves, and bearing heavy burdens on their backs, with their little ones stride on their shoulders, comes the despised and degraded women. They are the drudges in all heavy work; and after their lords have finished the repast which the women have prepared for them, these despised creatures contentedly sit at a distance, and gather up the bones and fragments, which the men throw to them across their shoulders, just as we should throw meat to a dog. [...] They have a custom of offering their wives to their friends when they visit them; it is also regarded as a mark of respect to strangers. Many of the men possess four wives; the old men securing the greatest number. A sister is exchanged for a daughter, and if a young man has several sisters he is always sure of obtaining wives in return. Should the ladies object, or become obstreperous, they are mollified by a shower of very sharp blows on the head with a wirri.[17]

For their part, however, the women thus pitied were not considered morally respectable since they were imagined as hypersexual and uninhibited, a quality that was also attributed to Native American and Afro-American women in North America. The "primitive savage" assessment was primarily based on the alleged treatment of "their" women. At the same time, the gender and sexual relations of white colonialists to Indigenous women were structured with reference to the desires of Indigenous women, who not only seemed to promise sexual fulfillment but were seen as a substitute and metaphor for the land and its conquest. Thus, Indigenous women were made doubly submissive, first as part of an "inferior", "savage" society, and second in terms of gender. Savages and women, including European women, were considered by Enlightenment theorists to be consubstantial, because they were deemed emotional, weak, and irrational. Alleged cannibalism, promiscuity, and nudity were repeatedly invoked to prove the arrested stage of Indigenous development. This verdict culminated in the regularly encountered assessment that Indigenous people were ugly. Thus, the fixed European gaze on Indigenous men and women's bodies aesthetically confirms other value judgements.

Means, Motive, and Opportunity

In criminal law, "means, motive, and opportunity" is a popular cultural summation of the three aspects of a crime needed to convince a jury of guilt in a criminal proceeding and has recently also been applied in the historiography of genocides.[18] To make a case for genocide by biowarfare, one must establish these three elements. I will tackle the problem of motive first:

17 George French Angas: Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand, pp. 82 ff., 88.
18 See Michael P. Jasinski: Examining Genocides.

On 26 January 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip proclaimed British sovereignty over the Australian continent when he planted the Union Jack on Gadigal land at Sydney Cove – gaining effective control over these lands would require genocidal practices that lasted almost 150 years. Initially, the British had two motivations to conquer Australia. The first was their fierce competition with France to control trade routes and gain access to colonial products and markets. The second was their need for penal colonies after the American Colonies had been lost in the American Revolution. Phillip's fleet carried about 1000 convicts, 200 British marines, and some civilian officials. Phillip instituted a military beachhead colony based on convict labor. At first, interactions with the local Gadigal people were friendly but soon deteriorated when the British started to take the land occupied by the local Indigenous population, disrespected religious sites, and used open violence in the process of dispossession.[19] The Australian Indigenous population fought back, killing convicts who had committed rapes and robbings. This resistance constituted a significant crisis since the ground at Sydney Cove was not suited for food production. It seemed logical to expand the settlement into the fertile land at the head of the Parramatta River. This expansion, however, failed due to the military resistance of the Aboriginal people. Phillip demanded the detachment of additional 600 marines, which would have taken several months to be put in effect.

Meanwhile, colonists were already dying in large numbers from disease and malnutrition. The future of the colony seemed to be bleak. In early 1789, only one year after the First Fleet's arrival, a smallpox epidemic hit the Indigenous population, wiping out more than half of the local population. None of the convicts or marines suffered from smallpox at this time. Aboriginal resistance collapsed following this medical catastrophe. It was only then that successful farming began at Parramatta, allowing the colony to sustain itself. The motive is clear: the colony's existence depended on the grabbing of additional land from the original inhabitants.

Concerning the means, one has to delve into the medical history of the smallpox epidemic. In the 18th century, smallpox was a disease that invariably struck European and American populations. Its effect was so impressive for contemporaries that the English historian Thomas Babington Macaulay described it as "the most terrible ministers of death".[20] Among European populations, about one-third of those who contracted the disease fell victim to it. Among Indigenous populations, this rate could easily exceed 50 percent.

The variola virus causes the highly contagious smallpox. The incubation period is twelve days. On the twelfth day after infection, flu-like symptoms begin, i.e., fever and headache, which then turn into nonspecific pain and vomiting. On the fifteenth or sixteenth day, the typical pustules appear on the surface of the skin. There was a chance of survival if this happened, which depended much on the victim's age and physical condition. In the third week, the pustules began to dry up and slowly disappeared in the fourth week.

19 See Stephen Gapps: The Sydney Wars.
20 Ian Glynn, Jenifer Glynn: The Life and Death of Smallpox, p. 2.

Those who survived to this stage could be scarred or blinded for life but were immunized against reinfection. Infection occurred through direct human skin contact or droplet infection. There were no animal hosts that transmitted the disease. Most commonly, variola infect its human victim by the airborne route, i.e., inhalation. Theoretically, infection through wounds in the body was also possible but relatively rare. The virus appeared in all bodily secretions and retained its virulence long after it had left the body. It was clear to contemporaries that the disease was transmitted through direct contact with the sick, even though the infection concept was unknown.

In this respect, too, smallpox represented a peculiarity. In other infectious diseases, such as typhoid, bubonic plague, yellow fever, malaria, cholera, or tuberculosis, 18th-century physicians and patients did not see contagion at work. In the case of smallpox, however, the remedy of quarantine was repeatedly employed, a clear indication that it was understood that intercourse with diseased persons would further spread the disease. Contemporaries also understood that contaminated objects could spread the disease. Sometimes responsible officials, therefore, decided to burn blankets and clothing of infected people. Hence we can conclude that smallpox could be weaponized if war parties understood the connection between infection and the spread of the disease through contact with the sick or their personal belongings. Thus, means clearly existed. To address opportunity, I would like to focus on colonial warfare in North America:

In the 18th century, the accusation was raised that smallpox had been used as a biological weapon. This theory was plausible because American and English theologians and physicians had begun experimenting with so-called "inoculation" as early as 1721. Moreover, since the disease was endemic in England, and an increasing proportion of American cities' inhabitants had undergone inoculation by 1750, it can be assumed that both British military personnel and some city dwellers in North America were immune to the disease. This immunity made it possible to target the smallpox virus against Native Americans. Almost half of all those infected died in places where they had had no previous contact with the pathogen.

Inoculation must not be confused with vaccination, which was carried out with the cowpox virus from 1796 on. Inoculation, which was first practiced in 1721, involved transferring the live variola virus into an open wound. The subsequent infection outbreak with the otherwise potentially deadly virus took a much milder course, with about one percent of those infected dying. It is still unclear why the virus is deadlier when inhaled than when it enters the body through a wound. The milder course of smallpox brought about by inoculation was not only far less risky, but it also meant that patients did not feel as ill and therefore walked around endangering other people. This fact has repeatedly led to debates about whether inoculation was not more dangerous than strict quarantine. Doctors, mainly, were among those who initially ran up a storm against inoculation. In the 18th century, however, it became accepted as the best precaution against smallpox, and even English country people began to carry out inoculations on their own. In other words, although smallpox was a dangerous and contagious disease, white Europeans and Americans had a comprehensive understanding

of how the disease spread, and they had developed methods of handling this scourge of humankind.

During the French and Indian Wars in North America, the British military undoubtedly used biological warfare against Native Americans, as we will see below. Smallpox pathogens' deliberate spread was not limited to isolated episodes during the 18th century; smallpox had been used against Indians by English settlers and English soldiers as early as the 17th century. The so-called "King Philip's War" of 1675-1676 broke out – essentially because the Wampanoag and Narragansett Indians assumed that English traders had contaminated their villages with smallpox.

The best-documented event is the infamous biological warfare campaign against American Indians by General Jeffery Amherst in 1763. The use of smallpox resulted in a decidedly deadly epidemic among Native Americans that claimed the lives of several thousand men, women, and children. British troops faced a powerful coalition of Native American and French forces in the North American territory during the Seven Years' War. More than once, it looked as if the latter would gain the upper hand. However, with the end of the war, the French lost their colonies in the north to the British. The first royal governor-general of Canada and commander-in-chief of all troops in the area to be appointed was Jeffery Amherst. His heavy-handed Indian policy and a religious-political renewal movement of Native Americans turned Indian populations in the Great Lakes area against the British.

In 1762, Ottawa leader Pontiac managed to unite the Ottawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomie peoples under his overall command. Pontiac quickly realized that the English attracted settlers to the vicinity of the fortifications who used the Indians' land for farming, thus driving off the game that the Indians hunted. Pontiac decided to drive out the English in 1762 and arranged with his allies to meet in a coordinated major assault to attack the English forts, a remarkable strategic and organizational achievement. Of the twelve English forts attacked, eight were destroyed, proving that the Indians, when united and well-prepared to strike, still posed a military threat to Europeans. Pontiac himself attacked Detroit on May 7 but witnessed that his carefully devised plan had been betrayed to the English. The Indian leader was forced to lay siege to the fort.

On 30 October 1763, Pontiac retreated into the backcountry after Colonel Bouquet, an English officer, used smallpox as a biological weapon against the Indians on Amherst's orders. It was not until 1764 that the English, after considerable effort, succeeded in gaining the upper hand against the disease-ridden Indians. In 1766, Pontiac concluded a peace treaty that essentially meant a return to the status quo ante bellum. How much Amherst was driven by his desire to exterminate the Indians is shown in his correspondence. Thus he wrote in his screwed expression to a subordinate in August 1763:

> I shall only say, that it Behoves the Whole Race of Indians to Beware (for I fear the best of them have in some measure been privy to, & Concerned in, the Late Mischief) of Carrying Matter much farther against the English, or Daring to form

> Conspiracys, as the Consequences will most certainly occasion measures to be taken, that, in the End will put a most effectual Stop to their very Being.[21]

In another letter of the same summer, he remarked:

> I do not desire to enter into any negotiations With the Tribes Engaged in the present Insurrection, untill they have suffered a most severe Chastisement, Which must be Previous to any accommodation, or they will most assuredly break it. Indeed their Total Extirpation is scarce sufficient Attonement for the Bloody and Inhuman deeds.[22]

At the time Amherst sent these letters, he had already approved plans to infect the rebellious Indians with smallpox. On 13 July 1763, Colonel Henry Bouquet had suggested that he took matters into his own hands when he noted in a postscript of a letter to Amherst, dated 13 July 1763:

> P.S. I will try to inoculate the Indians by means of Blankets that may fall in their hands taking care however not to get the disease myself. As it is a pity to pose good men against them, I wish we could make use of the Spaniard's method and hunt them With English Dogs. Supported by Rangers and some Light Horse, Who would I think effectively extirpate or remove that Vermine. H. B.[23]

From a report by Captain Simeon Ecuyer, the commanding officer of Fort Pitt, which Native Americans besieged, we know that smallpox had broken out only a few weeks earlier.[24] Thus the means for infection with variola pathogens were in place, for there was a smallpox hospital at the fort with the appropriate blankets and cloths in which the variola virus had taken root. Amherst did not need much time to think, for on 16 July 1763, just three days after the eager Bouquet suggested to him that smallpox be used against the Indians, he wrote:

> P.S. You will do well to try to Inoculate the Indians by means of Blanketts, as well as to Cry Every Other Method that can serve to Extirpate this Execrable Race. I should be very glad your Scheme for Hunting them Down by Dogs could take effect, but England is at too great a Distance to think of that at present.[25]

Warfare in North America

One could argue that with this exchange of letters, the British leadership's intentions had become unmistakably clear that the trinity of motive, means, and opportunity has been established. Still, the question remains whether these plans were also put into practice. However, from the diary of militia commander Captain William Trent, a direct subordinate of Fort Pitt's commander, we know that the Delawares' emissaries were infected with smallpox as early as May 1763, two months before Amherst and Bouquet discussed the matter. After the Delawares warned the British of approaching troops from other Indian groups and told them to leave, the commanding officer thanked them. The diary continues:

21 Amherst to Johnson, 27 August 1763. Library of Congress: Nr. 257.
22 Ibid.
23 Peter d'Errico: Jeffrey Amherst and Smallpox Blankets.
24 See Jeremy Hugh Baron: British Biological Warfare, p. 261.
25 Library of Congress: Nr. 114.

> Out of our regard to them we gave them two Blankets and an Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect.[26]

A few months after this entry, a smallpox epidemic swept away large parts of the Indian population of the Ohio Valley. It becomes clear that the officers anticipated the effect that smallpox would have on the Indians. The genocidal intent of the British officers, especially the governor and commander-in-chief Amherst, who would have accepted any other form of extermination, also becomes evident.

Historian Philip Ranlet has shown that the distinguished naturalist Benjamin Franklin also assumed that the British had used smallpox against hostile Indians and American revolutionaries.[27] While the colonials laid siege to Boston in 1775, the British commanders in the city were busy inoculating their troops. A sailor reported "a number [of persons] coming out [...] have been inoculated with the design of spreading the smallpox thro' this country and camp".[28] Ann Becker concludes that Washington's vigilance in segregating those infected with the disease and his use of selective inoculation were critical factors in preventing a disastrous epidemic among the troops and militia outside Boston.[29] That same year, the defenders of Quebec purportedly sent infected people to the American camp. Thomas Jefferson was convinced the British were responsible for the illness in the lines.

> 'La petite verole.' I have been informed by officers who were on the spot, and whom I believe myself, that this disorder was sent into our army designedly by the commanding officer in Quebec. It answered his purposes effectually.[30]

The British Army, under duress in the Yorktown campaign, also targeted American civilians. Major General Alexander Leslie, commander of the British garrison at Portsmouth, wrote on 13 July 1781, to his commanding officer Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis: "Above 700 Negroes are coming down the [James] River in the Small Pox. [...] I shall distribute them about the Rebels Meantimes".[31] Therefore, it is established that British military leaders did not refrain from using smallpox as a biological weapon if they felt they were losing in a military campaign. It so happened during the French and Indian War, and it was repeated during the American Revolution.

Warfare in Australia

The Australian historian Noel Butlin and others after him very early raised the question of whether the smallpox epidemic among the Aboriginal Australians around Port Jackson in 1789 had resulted from biological warfare.[32] Indeed, there is a lot of evidence suggesting that the First Fleet's British commanders

26 Albert T. Volwiler: William Trent's Journal at Fort Pitt.
27 Philip Ranlet: The British, Slaves, and Smallpox in Revolutionary Virginia, p. 217.
28 George Washington: Letter from Gen. George Washington to John Hancock.
29 Cf. Ann M. Becker: Smallpox at the Siege of Boston.
30 Thomas Jefferson: Comments on Soulés' Histoire, p. 301.
31 Gregory J. W. Urwin: When Freedom Wore a Red Coat, p. 86.
32 Noel George Butlin: Our Original Aggression, p. 334.

reduplicated their biological experiment on Australian Indigenous people. As in the historical examples of North America, the British detachment was under pressure. The survival of the 800 plus convicts and the 200 marines was at stake because Sydney Cove was unsuited for agriculture, and the British beachhead was confined to a tiny area.[33] The British had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to get rid of the Aboriginal Australians in their vicinity. It is plausible to assume a deliberate infection because the British had the necessary medical knowledge (means).

Some members of the officer corps aboard the ships had served during the American Revolution, which gave them first-hand knowledge of biological warfare. Major Robert Ross had served during the American Revolution and was dispatched as commander of the First Fleet garrison of marines. Captain-Lieutenant Watkin Tench likewise had seen action as a very young officer in the War against American revolutionaries. First Lieutenant George Johnson had seen action aboard a British vessel in New York and Halifax. Lieutenant Ralph Clark also had fought in the war against the American Indians before joining the marine corps that was dispatched to Australia in 1788. They did not risk becoming infected because the British marine infantry battalion and the prisoners were immune to the disease, either from previous exposure or inoculation. The conditions for a deliberate infection were also present, since skin particles from smallpox patients could be used as carriers of the disease and were on board the immigrant ships.

A possible motive for the genocide arose because the colony was on the verge of a general famine in 1788/89, which would have made the effective expulsion of the increasingly hostile Aboriginal Australians impossible. The opportunity was also there since no witnesses were present, and the epidemic could always be presented as an unfortunate result of contagion.

It is more than plausible to assume that, under the given circumstances, some officers might have thought that the problem of hostile Aboriginal Australians could be solved by infection, especially since some of the officers had been deployed in the American Revolutionary War. The bottle of deadly variola virus, taken aboard as a possible vaccine for children born in the colony, could be kept virulent with cooling fans' help. Arnold Zuckerman traced back the history of ventilation aboard British ships to the year 1741.[34] New research shows that "[t]here is little doubt that smallpox scabs collected in 1787, if handled professionally, would have retained significant viral activity for more than two years".[35] Warren's observation that the virus could have survived the voyage aboard the First Fleet ship is not based on ventilation on said ship. Instead, he stresses the relatively low temperatures at Sydney Cove in 1788/1789.

Therefore, medical historian Judy Campbell's argument that the pathogens could not have survived the long voyage from England to Australia is wrong.[36] In the Australian case, we have thus established motive, means, and opportunity. Noel Butlin's assessment about the possibility of deliberate infection of the

33 George Burnett Barton: History of New South Wales from the Records, pp. 142, 147.
34 See Arnold Zuckerman: Scurvy and the Ventilation of Ships in the Royal Navy.
35 Christopher Warren: Could First Fleet Smallpox Infect Aborigines, p. 160.
36 Judy Campbell: Invisible Invaders, p. 62.

Aboriginal Australians as a purposeful act of extermination is still valid. However, contrary to the Ohio Valley events thirty years earlier, there is no written order from the commanding officer or even the governor. This lack is hardly surprising since the British in Australia were not officially in a state of war with the Aboriginal Australians. The British officers had received the English king's explicit and repeated instruction, George III, to show themselves friendly and accommodating towards the "natives".

> You are to endeavour, by every possible means, to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. And if the natives any of our subjects shall wantonly destroy them, or give them any tected unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations, it is our will and pleasure that you do cause such offenders to be brought to punishment according to the degree of the offence.[37]

A written order or note to the contrary in the diary of an officer stationed in Australia could easily have been interpreted as a royal instruction violation.

Conclusion

The British Army had already used bioweapons against the Indigenous population during the Seven Years' War and American civilians during the American Revolution. It was only logical to assume that the British detachment had deliberately triggered the smallpox epidemic of 1789/90 to destroy and/or weaken the unruly Indigenous population of Australia in such a way that they would no longer resist a spread of white settlements in the south of the country. Once the bridgehead in Sydney was secured, and the Aboriginal Australians ceased to constitute a military threat, the British colonial officers could resort to "normal" military tactics. With the emergence of a militarily and politically secured rule over a rapidly growing group of settlers, biological warfare became superfluous, especially since smallpox regularly reappeared within the Indigenous populations of the 19th century. The endemic thus weakened their long-term resistance against settler-colonialist incursion. Moreover, the construction of a "primitive savage" who ultimately lacked humanity created the conditions for individual settlers to take the law into their own hands and enforce land seizures against Indigenous people by armed family groups or with the help of the mounted police.

37 George Burnett Barton: History of New South Wales from the Records, p. 485.

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Creativity, Critique and the Problem of Situated Knowledge

In their book, 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives', Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith investigate "local and global transits of storytelling", recognising not only "published life narratives", but also seven additional sites which they analyse in detail: "fact-finding in the field; handbooks and websites; nationally-based human rights commissions; human rights commission reports; collections of testimonies; stories in the media; and other scattered venues through which narratives circulate".[1] This chapter explores further examples of storytelling 'transits' between local relevance and more universal mastery.

It was with a story that I once began a talk at the University of Melbourne. To be precise, it was on Thursday, 23 May 2019. I began: "Imagine a New Guinea highlander being taken on a tour of a physics lab here in Melbourne". I now want to retain the 'spatial demonstrative' or 'deictic' part of speech 'here' in this written version. If I edited it, I would be doing what writing often does, taking the statement out of its time and place, and in the process making it more universal in its application.

Begin again:

> Imagine a New Guinea highlander being taken on a tour of a physics lab here in Melbourne. His hosts are careful to avoid indulging in condescension towards this person who has never seen such a facility before. Imagine the visitor saying, after gazing at some machine", They tell me that in your culture you have things called atoms, is that right?" The scientists laugh heartily, quite unselfconsciously. "Atoms are everywhere", they assure him, "in every object, every living thing, in the whole world". They explain a bit more, using one of those artefacts with large coloured spheres stuck together.
>
> The visitor listens politely, and then ventures, "No. We don't have them, not in my village. Our ancestors never spoke of such things". Then, one of the younger scientists pipes up, "Actually, ours do. It goes back to the Jains in India, but it was Democritus who coined the term 'atomos' around 450BC [...]" but he trails off as his colleagues give him The Look. Ancestral heritage is not the issue here. Do not dare provincialise scientific knowledge when such important universals have been finally achieved, after much labour. Well, they are universal for a good part of the world, at least for all those who call themselves 'modern', which might be a minority in fact

My fictional narrative illustrates Schaffer and Smith's storytelling transits. So much of its meaning depends on perceived spatial and temporal differences, ones that follow the vectors of colonialism and modernism: the New Guinea highlander would be *exotic* and *premodern*, not *with us here and now* in our certainties about atoms.

1 Kay Schaffer, Sidonie Smith: Human Rights and Narrated Lives, p. 35.

My story owes much to Bruno Latour's 'We Have Never Been Modern', but also, much further back, to a foundational text by Donna Haraway which set me on the path of thinking about situated knowledges:

> We, the feminists in the debates about science and technology, are the Reagan era's "special-interest groups" in the rarefied realm of epistemology, where traditionally what can count as knowledge is policed by philosophers codifying cognitive canon law. Of course, a special-interest group is, by Reaganoid definition, any collective historical subject that dares to resist the stripped-down atomism of Star Wars, hypermarket, postmodern, media-simulated citizenship. Max Headroom doesn't have a body; therefore, he alone sees everything in the great communicator's empire of the Global Network. No wonder Max gets to have a naive sense of humor and a kind of happily regressive, preoedipal sexuality, a sexuality that we ambivalently – with dangerous incorrectness – had imagined to be reserved for lifelong inmates of female and colonized bodies and maybe also white male computer hackers in solitary electronic confinement.[2]

This was 1988, and second wave feminism was at a high point. What interests me is Donna Haraway's style, which, if you are a philosopher "codifying cognitive canon law", you will find annoying, because it gets in the way of straight thought. In any case, my claim is that Haraway's famous notion of situated knowledge was lobbed into the field of science studies as a feminist intervention, and it upset the certainties of traditional masculinist science. And she did it in style. Had she not written the way she did – with great originality, range and iconoclastic power – would her article have been as well-cited as it is today?

I imagine – here I go, storytelling again – that you in the audience are mostly academics too, so I know how you love your metrics. How well cited is this article ("Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective") that appeared in 1988 in 'Feminist Studies'? Let's try to calculate the impact, with the 21,019 Google Scholar citations it has accumulated, starting well before the time Google Scholar, or the internet, even existed.[3] In 1988, people would have photocopied it and put in the post to their friends. The impact is never direct; the article transits in a haphazard fashion through the world on its academic career, with specific kinds of movement. It is not just a broadcast model of communication. Each reading of the paper and each citation *relocates* the paper, or one of its ideas, or one of its quotable phrases, in a new situation with its heterogeneous support act of other citations, other ideas, other political "transits" or vectors. Everywhere the paper lands, something new, something slightly new, happens.

But the style is extraordinary. It doesn't stick strictly to its topic, having a broad range of references. There's the pop culture reference to 'Star Wars' and the figure of Max Headroom, a feminist target with his "happily regressive, preoedipal sexuality". There's the political target that is the President at the time, Ronald Reagan. She targets Reagan because of his attack on "special-interest groups", among whom her feminist readers, who are now thus politically *situated*. The rhetoric plays into the argument. Reagan, at the time, was trying to cut $50 billion out of the budget and he was making his pitches in his weekly radio broadcasts

2 Donna Haraway: Situated Knowledges, pp. 574-575.
3 As at 25 October 2021, 1:30:13 pm.

– radio, can you believe it? – And it was the "special-interest groups" that were popping up in the landscape to oppose his cuts to public programs.

I want to stress the means of communication in play (radio, photocopies, the postal service, and later email and Jstor) because they are means of distribution of these knowledges I am enjoining you to see as situated. They start, in one place, the text itself being composed out of a network of references and then getting distributed by one or several means, broadcast or networked. Let's put this concept of 'distribution' to one side for a moment because I want to come back to it to analyse it in real and abstract terms. Distribution, I will argue, can be abstract whenever conceptual tools are used to push entities into particular arrangements, like 'trees' for the descent of species in Darwinian biology. Deleuze and Guattari, of course, proposed a counter-metaphor, the 'rhizome'. I think, in principle, that it's no good talking about *situated knowledges* without the corollary of their *distribution*.

But it is time to summarise Haraway's argument in this early Science and Technology Studies (STS) article, forging a feminist position therein with its references to Freud, Marx, Althusser, Latour and Strathern. Those theorists are needed to situate the subject, as we have seen, within a field of entrenched gender-inflected inequalities. But her main aim is to attack a masculinist version of objectivity, and then revive it in feminist form. This "masculinist version of objectivity" exists more as rhetorical positioning than as the product of actual scientific inquiries. Its danger lies in the uses to which science is put, by non-scientists:

> From this point of view, science – the real game in town – is rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one's manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power.[4]

This happens whenever someone brandishes a fact, claiming it is naturally occurring, rather than painstakingly produced by a laboratory. That claim allows for an unmarked version of the scientific gaze, an omniscient gaze from nowhere and everywhere, one that Haraway calls the 'God trick'.

But she is definitely not a social constructionist, nor a relativist. She argues against the idea that all forms of knowledge are mere social constructs. Rather she wants to define the articulations, and doesn't recuse from the feminist critique of how male hegemony lines up with the broader dominant power structures:

> the conquering gaze from nowhere [...] makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation. This gaze signifies the unmarked positions of Man and White, one of the many nasty tones of the word 'objectivity' to feminist ears in scientific and technological, late-industrial, militarized, racist, and male-dominant societies, that is, here, in the belly of the monster, in the United States in the late 1980s.[5]

The next step, in building her feminist reconstruction of objectivity, she retains vision, but embodies it. It becomes partial and situated:

> I want a feminist writing of the body that metaphorically emphasizes vision again, because we need to reclaim that sense to find our way through all the visualizing tricks and powers of modem sciences and technologies that have transformed the

4 Donna Haraway: Situated Knowledges, p. 577.
5 Ibid., p. 581.

> objectivity debates. We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not so perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision. All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see.[6]

That, I would claim, is Donna Haraway in a critical mode, but something of a creative one as well. The metaphors and other figures of speech that give the article its *style*, have the effect of nudging thought out of its usual pathways. She reaches far and wide, even bringing in the figure of the trickster Coyote in Southwest native American thought to "make room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production"[7] as the agency of objects becomes visible, and Nature ceases to be conceived of as a passive resource, where matter is extracted for the benefit of culture, matter conceived of as either dead or about to be dead.

Indigenous Sciences

It is on pressing questions such as these – naturalism, agencies of the non-human, extractivism – that the Indigenous sciences are starting to emerge more strongly as a field of endeavour.

I talked earlier of abstract distribution. Actual distribution refers to the real ways in which forms of knowledge are distributed, such as the spread of the idea that all matter is composed of atoms. It can only increase its sphere of influence, expanding from being relevant in only a small locality, becoming relevant for a whole country, then onwards more globally, if the idea is published in multiple forms, popularised and taught. It took centuries for Atomic Physics to consolidate the kind of influence that generates the kind of money that it takes to build and maintain the Large Hadron Collider in Europe.

But an *abstract* distribution also has an effect on how we think about things like atoms, things we habitually think of, are taught to think of, as purely natural. This is part of a more general metaphysical problem. Suppose you encounter something new in the world, like a new kind of fish dredged up from some deep ocean channel. You might have no problem classifying it as a part of Nature, even if you haven't yet determined its genus and species. But you may not have asked a fundamental metaphysical question: "how is it this fish and I are on this Earth together?" If you go to the familiar Nature/Culture divide, it gives you an easy answer, all too easy: The fish must be a part of Nature and you are a part of Culture. And the very next question flows from that same distribution that has

6 Ibid., pp. 582 f.
7 Ibid., p. 594.

made Nature passive and exploitable: *"Should I eat it"*? But that abstract distribution is by no means universal. We find out it is provincially European if we read anthropologists Vivieros de Castro ('Cannibal Metaphysics') or Philippe Descola ('Beyond Nature and Culture').

If you went to Broome (where I do my ethnographic work) in the old days, you might have found out all sorts of interesting things about fish, including a different kind of answer to the metaphysical question about why we are on Earth together. Someone catching salmon might say to herself, "Big mob of salmon here, I'd better hand them over to the elders for distribution". Or: "I shouldn't even have caught this kind of fish because my *jalnga* (totem) prohibits it".

In this culture, as in those studied by Vivieros de Castro in the Amazon, there is no concept of a singular Nature, rather the human and non-human worlds are entangled in all sorts of rights and responsibilities. This is just what Haraway was urging in her recrafting of masculinist science towards a less alienated relationship with the world, what she called a more 'conversational' one.

I know, 'masculinist science', 'Western science' – these are terrible generalisations, but the fabrication of the Nature-Culture divide was real enough, and we can now identify it as being provincial, situated in post-enlightenment Europe. It extends right through to the revolution of thought in the Humanities and Social Sciences that was the structuralist movement, from the mid-twentieth century to about the time of Haraway's article. All those oppositions they loved to produce hinged around the fundamental Nature-Culture one: man/woman, raw/cooked, day/night, etc.

The Anthropology that came visiting in Aboriginal Australia may not always have been structuralist, but was itself founded on the naturalist ontology based on the separation of nature and culture, and to this day many of its practitioners can't think without it. After all, anthropology is the study of *human* society, by definition. No-one in the Australian branch of the discipline, except perhaps Deborah Bird Rose, has articulated how violently European naturalism has wrenched Aboriginal thought away from its non-human articulations, that is, a brilliant kinship system that includes plants, animals and humans in reciprocal relationships. A quite different distribution to the one articulated in Bruno Latour's 'modernist settlement' (1993). It is a distribution that is part of a process of colonisation, making sure it knows what to relegate to the basket of 'mere beliefs', and what to take seriously.

Back to atoms: However solid the achievements of atomic physics in the objective domain, it is also the case that they are a part of culture, and not just firm laws of nature. The knowledge is cultural not just because it can be mobilised for political or military ends, but because it needs our support. Knowledge of atoms would no doubt eventually lapse if our institutions didn't continue to keep funding it, keep teaching about it, keep making it relevant, keep hitching it to other discoveries.[8]

8 Zoe Todd updates Haraway's rhetoric: "Through the logics of its own science, white supremacy seeks to categorize humans in such a way to stretch its spindly white fingers back through the mammals, the dinosaurs, the marine creatures, the stromatolites, the nucleated-cells, the archeans, the prokaryotes, the very carbon and oxygen and hydrogen

With that institutionally-based approach – which underpins Bruno Latour's 'Modes of Existence' project – the questions are not so much about the *existence* of atoms, but about what makes knowledge of them *persist*, Latour's thesis ever since 'Laboratory Life' is all about the *heterogeneity* of the arrangements necessary for science to thrive. Science is not, was never, pure.

European Paganism

Before Europe was modernised it had a pagan system going that had elements in common with totemism. Before Christian monotheism, ancient European worlds were replete with gods and demi-gods: household gods, naiades in fresh-water springs and rivers, the aurae, nymphs of the breezes. You knew not to anger Poseidon if you wanted to sail the seas safely, better to make a small sacrifice before embarking... all these were swept aside, as mere superstition or hereticism, by the rise of the One God, whose sacredness did not lie in any territory, who travelled with the book, whose temples could be built anywhere, who gave Man dominion over Nature...

But what if Aboriginal totemic systems were right? By which I mean they 'have something going for them'. That's all I'm interested in analysing these days, what institutions *have going for them*, their attributes, their attachments, how they *belong* together in their disparate elements. You might prefer that vernacular translation to the more formal *process ontology*: by which Alfred North Whitehead meant not what something *is*, but how is it that it *persists*? What elements does it have to acquire or shed to keep going, or what happens when it hits a roadblock and gets interrupted?

Soon as one says, in this post-critical fashion, "what if Aboriginal totemic systems have something going for them?", you might pay attention because you think, "is this an idea I could get attached to"?[9] And soon as you get attached to it, it expands its sphere of influence as you take it elsewhere, perhaps making other connections. Aboriginal totemic systems were both highly situated as knowledges, tied to specific sites, yet covering the whole country, it seems, doing really well for millennia, assisting in sustaining these civilisations that were then interrupted by the modernist, naturalist idea that said, "sorry, that kangaroo is not part of your more-than-human society, part of your clan's identity and being, no, it is an exploitable, dispensable part of Nature. It might be cute, but that's all it is".

So, to summarise, there are two steps in my move from critique to post-critique. First, I historicised and provincialised the Nature-Culture opposition, then I described another configuration called totemism and suggested it might have something going for it. If you thought it responded better to your way of thinking,

and nitrogen and atoms and electrons and quirks and quarks and energy that comprise this existence – they try to stretch that spindly finger back to the very beginning of being here on this planet, in the forms we understand being to take. [...] Artifacts are products of a specific and singular march of euro-western time, a march that drills down deep through the current epoch [...] all the way back to the first geologic eon, the Hadean" (n. pag.).

9 Rita Felski: Limits of Critique.

you might form an attachment. A positive link is made, an alliance is formed. Then, traditional critique (as outlined by Rita Felski and others, and implicit already in Haraway's article), usually denounces wrong ideas from a position of critical distance. This kind of critique might urge you to abandon your false consciousness, and do so in the name of freedom. You will be liberated from those bad ideas of the past as you join the elect few, the enlightened ones.[10] Not unlike the way that modern Science and Christianity worked in concert to smash those pagan superstitions.

With a post-critical method, you are not quite so revolutionary. You love your heritage. You love modern Science and you are devoted to western philosophy, but you are thinking about new future conditions and how your disciplines might have to be rebooted to survive. What do you have to add to, or subtract from them, to help them survive under these new conditions? This process of adding or subtracting applies to any element of the laboratory: add funding, remove gender bias, try it on a different machine, reverse the procedure, consider epistemological structures. This process might improve the science, and it regularly does, but not because the science is universalised as it is purified, or vice-versa, purified as it is universalised, but because partial side-ways steps are normal, tentative footholds for the continued relevance of a project. Relevance is never maintained by falling back on the authority of the facts, as in 'Nature has spoken', nor on the disinterested authority of the objective scientist, whose task was nevertheless one of taking 'situation-dependent' knowledge out of a lab and into the world where it continues its 'adventure of relevance' where relevance is "something coming to matter [...] an 'event of the world', not a subjective appreciation".[11]

I should offer a more concrete example. You wander around and you come across something that makes you think, because it sets up a puzzle in the way that Isabelle Stengers talks of as enigmas and Peter Sloterdijk talks of as riddles: "what drives thought [...] is not resistance, but riddles, that make one think. Having a big 'No' inside you leads to therapy, at best. But if you have a little riddle inside you, you arrive either at art or philosophy".[12]

What the hell is this?

Here's a riddle: how can the Wolfe Creek meteorite crater, located in the Western Australian outback, be *both* an object of Western science *and* be embedded in Walmajarri and Jaru knowledge without the one cancelling the other out, without cheap relativism, and without that old-style scientific condescension that has 'us' acknowledging 'their' *beliefs*, while *we* really *know*?

It's very situated, right, and there is knowledge about it. But my approach is not to ask existential questions, but ones related to process ontology: "what's it got going for it?" As soon as western science arrives on the site there is what

10 See Bruno Latour: Why Has Critique Run out of Steam.
11 Stengers quoted in Martin Savransky: The Adventure of Relevance, p. x.
12 Peter Sloterdijk: Selected Exaggerations, pp. 3 f.

Anna Tsing calls a "rush of stories",[13] often in the form of numbers around this resource. A meteor hit the Earth here about 300,000 years ago and the crater is 850 x 900 metres in diameter. Ask the Walmajarri and Jaru people and you get a different rush of stories about this place called 'kandimalal' and the snake 'warnayarra'.

My approach to the problem is this: one can't extract the fact of the crater being one thing or another from all the other kinds of knowledge that sustain the fact, what is often called the broader culture. The important thing is that an isolated fact about a star hitting the Earth will not explode Jaru/Walmajarri knowledge systems. It can't make the Rainbow Serpents disappear because they have been around for many generations, possibly for thousands of years. They are habitually treated as viable agents, acknowledged especially for doing the work of creating rivers. They are sacred and dangerous, connecting in multiple ways with water courses, storms, people and other creatures. They have been translated and exported into the mainstream. They have gone from oral to anthropological and fictional literature, and into new forms of visual culture, in a network too extensive to trace out or cite here.

The same caution applies in the other direction across the cultural divide. A Jaru elder insisting to a White scientist that the Rainbow snake curled around and made the crater, will not explode the scientist's scientific culture, and everything that extends and sustains it, unless the scientist decided for some reason to accept that as a fact along with everything else that keeps Jaru culture alive. The scientist would probably have to start inhabiting a different cosmos, and start living *like a Jaru person*. The same could apply, in principle, to some other Jaru person hearing the story of the falling meteor. "Oh, whitefella must be right, all that Rainbow snake story must be only humbug". Or they could try for some kind of accommodation, or synthesis, of the two accounts.

Shifting the emphasis from the *existence* (of a fact) to the *process of maintaining it* has the effect, in the case of my contrast, of making us talk about the *extensions* of Indigenous knowledge (or science), and the extensions of Western science. These extensions can be pretty weird.

So, in the case of the crater, we can imagine 'Western Science' arriving in Jaru country and being initially stranded, without the usual support group that helps to generate its habitual (factual) knowledge. No labs, no instruments; its "rush of stories" is slowed to a trickle. Until someone saves the day by finding a theodolite in the back of the truck and they can be happy measuring the size of the crater (numbers!). Then a rock is taken away for carbon dating (more numbers!) and the rush of stories can start again.

Things get a little queerer. *Situated* north of Perth there is a kind of scientific theme park, the Gravity Discovery Centre. At this site, a serious scientific facility is co-located with a public education exhibit where visitors can learn about Wolfe Creek; "Timeline of the Universe". We then see there is a little pedagogical exercise where you can 'create your own impact crater' by dropping a water-filled balloon from a specially-constructed 45 metre tower into a sand pit.

13 Anna Tsing: The Mushroom at the End of the World, p. 37.

The Gravity Discovery Centre has indeed gone to a lot of trouble and expense to *extend* the science and the *reliability* of its knowledge with a primitive kind of replicable experiment that actually proves very little about real meteorite impacts. It tries to be a simulation, but it is actually a kind of allegorical fiction. One has to ask: which extension is queerer? From crater to Rainbow snake, or crater to water balloon dropped into a sand pit by school kids? That contrast is a pretty stark one, but now I want to move to more hybrid, collaborative forms of science.

Bilbies as Environmental Activists

Today, following the protocols governing research in Aboriginal Australia, you may even find your modern science rudely interrupted, *put in its place*, situated. What you thought was universal knowledge about, say, bilbies, turns out to be not quite right. There is additional, local knowledge about bilbies that would add to, possibly reorient, the fund of knowledge. But to access it you have to change your method. First of all, you have to engage the traditional owners (TO), the knowledge-holders, in conversation, and then, following protocol, engage them as expert colleagues, if they agree to work with you.

"Expert colleague", by the way, is an important designation. The older identity was "informant", a subaltern anonymous designation that functioned like a valve in settler-colonial knowledge acquisition. It made sure that the Indigenous knowledge was transformed into something acceptable on the way out, and that nothing was transformed on the way in. Thousands of these valves kept the local knowledges local, while feeding the spread of sciences and social sciences around the country. The Modern sciences and social sciences thus continued their universalising mission.

But anyway, in Broome, my ecologist friend Malcolm Lindsay does increasingly interesting work with Indigenous rangers. At the time of the major environmentalist political campaign run against Woodside petroleum, Lindsay and his team intervened on behalf of the bilbies of Dampier Peninsula and gave these previously invisible beings a presence through a report and public discussion. As with some of the other critters, like the new species of spinner dolphin that was confirmed, there was a risk of the private scientists not finding them, the consultant scientists who did the Environmental Impact Report for Woodside Energy, at great expense. Talking to me, Lindsay stressed the importance of "having people on the ground for a long time, because endangered animals are by nature very rare and hard to find". The Woodside consultants had come from Perth, were staying in Broome and only taking day trips to look for the animals, while Lindsay had a core team of three and they spent 6-8 months looking for bilbies. While he was a qualified scientist, the people he worked with had different skills:

> [...] there was Damo, who'd lived with the Goolarabooloo for a while. Non-indigenous, but he'd spent a lot of time out in the bush and had incredible tracking and bush

> skills. And there's Craig who's a Koori man from southern NSW. Same thing, he'd done a lot of tracking with his mum when he was younger.[14]

Malcolm, as the ecologist, ended up doing "all the *gardiya* [whitefella] stuff, drawing the maps, entering the GPS points, taking the photos, cataloguing and writing the report". They were able to confirm 5 bilbies and the possibility of 10. The bilbies they found were active and using their burrows. But a bilby expert Malcolm spoken to considered that the usual way to survey is:

> [...] flying over in a helicopter, and see their burrows, 'cos they have a large spoil mound. And you can imagine lush vegetation with a big fresh pindan pile. It is quite visible – in the Tanami desert. And I said, 'Oh you won't see it here, there's too much foliage, undergrowth of acacias etc.' He said, 'Oh well if you can't see it from the air, they won't be there'.[15]

And that was a case of falling back onto the authority of a universalising science. The danger with that, according to Lindsay, is that when such an expert opinion is delivered, the ecologist will *not* assume that 'an absence of evidence is evidence of absence', but the corporate boss could easily make that leap when writing up the executive summary, the text that prefaces the body of the report, the text that is the only part that politicians and other executives will read. These are the kinds of shortcuts that can be made in the writing up, to enhance the chances of environmental clearance.

With the work of such scientists who work closely with Indigenous rangers, we find that the science is changing in interesting ways, things are added and subtracted to make it respond better in terms of relevance, "putting the adventure of shared relevance over and above the authority of judgement" as Isabelle Stengers says.[16] Indigenous knowledge, which has stood the test of time and maintained relevance through intergenerational transfer, assures its rigour through replicability, rather than statistics and other forms of measurement. To the extent that it and more mainstream sciences reinforce each other's results, and change each other, previously subaltern Indigenous knowledges may well end up acquiring the designation 'Indigenous science' (rather than traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)), and universalising in dialogue with other Indigenous sciences in other parts of the world, all of them gaining relevance in times of climatic upheaval.

Maintaining relevance is about maintaining a belonging to the world which does not fall back on the authority of judgement or the purity of methods. In this new heterogeneous space, I suggested, a post-critical attitude, and set of techniques, are enhanced by way of attachments and networks. We had as a premise to this argument the idea that knowledge is situated, but it was never stuck in one place, pinpointed; it was always looking to move out, by hitching its concepts, techniques and affects, to available networks. The critical attitude also moves knowledge, but by way of detachment. But while this peculiarly modern form of critical detachment was highly suitable for diasporic European thought, erasing forms of ancient know-how and heritage as it progressed, it is hardly

14 Stephen Muecke, Paddy Roe: The Children's Country, p. 92.
15 Ibid.
16 Isabelle Stengers: Another Science is Possible, p. 42.

adapted to the new set of territories becoming visible once again under what Latour calls the "new climatic regime", an assessment that calls for resetting the parameters of this modernity in dialogue, he says, with those colonised by that form of modernity.

Creativity and Attachment

As we marvelled at Donna Haraway's flamboyant turns of phrase, and became envious of her citation numbers, we realised that her concept of "situated knowledges" was too attractive to stay put. People cottoned onto it. It was relevant to a certain kind of feminism in an emergent STS context, as it provincialised an idealism called "masculinist science", something that might belong more to some dominant scientific culture than to the practices of actual scientists in labs or in the field, taking things slowly, doing good work, not being taken up too quickly by industries and markets demanding that the results fit the usual capitalist criteria for relevance.[17]

What of creativity? I don't think it is confined to the formal devices, as in: *first* you have a good idea, *then* you write it up carefully choosing your metaphors. The reason my examples have come from science studies is that this is where – also in the Environmental Humanities – philosophical concepts leave their comfortable networks to test themselves in other domains – like mainstream science – where simply being critical, denouncing bad ideas, is not enough to create momentum. If you leave one network it is probably because it is becoming irrelevant. You are not liberating yourself from an oppressive regime, as much as you can leave that regime because you have found footholds, new attachments, in emergent networks with momentum: a perception that a version of feminist science might provide new methods, that Indigenous science has new interspecies, reterritorialized solutions to problems older sciences and social sciences just couldn't negotiate.

I want to finish with another fictional story about a famous novelist's research process, 'getting something going'. He was working on a new book about a part of the country where his family had grown over three or four generations. He thought it would be a good idea to contact the local Land Council to talk about his project; might be some interesting leads there. He got onto a lady eventually – these Land Council workers are pretty overcommitted – who asked him for a one-page synopsis. He sent it in and was surprised to hear back in 24 hours.

> "This is interesting, what you are planning", said the contact. "And I have someone who may be able to help you. But the Board of Directors does want to have oversight of the project. This is our country, you know; we have Native Title. We can't stop anyone writing a book – we really don't want to – but for a long time now, generations really, white people have told stories about our country and our history in their [...] you know [...] from *their* point of view."
>
> "OK", said the writer, "Sure. Let me think what to do".

17 Ibid., p. 79.

The writer emailed his agent who rang the next day.

The agent was adamant. "Look, don't let them push you into anything. You have a reputation to uphold. Anyway, the publisher doesn't want any mucking around. This is *your* story. Your unique voice.

And what's this nonsense about a clause in the contract including this what-name Land Council?"

Our writer was faced with a dilemma and thought about it for a long time. Finally, his curiosity got the better of him – who was this person willing to talk to him?

He got the contact from the Land Council; rang the number, with some trepidation, early one morning. Sounded like an old lady who came on the line.

By the time they stopped talking, his cup of tea had gone cold.

He drove out West the next Saturday, past the dry creek beds, the fallow brown fields.

He pulled up at a cottage on the outskirts of town and the old lady was waiting out front on her porch.

"Oh, good. You have a four wheel drive", was the first thing she said. And as they sat down at her kitchen table for a cuppa, they paused and looked kindly at each other.

The famous author realised later – and it became part of the story – that this was the moment when he lost the plot, that plot he had sketched out on the one-pager.

"We'll go for a drive in a little while", his new companion said. "A drive and a little walk. There's this tree I want to show you."

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Grass Roots Activism for Rural Women in China

> There are two Chinas, one rich and one poor and I am walking between them.[1]

Rural women are the most socially disadvantaged group in contemporary China.[2] Numbering approximately 400 million in the early 1980s and around 300 million in 2017,[3] they comprise close to 50 percent of the female population of the country's 1.3 billion people. Economic reforms introduced since the late 1970s have fundamentally transformed these women's lives, breaking the traditional production mode of village life, dating back some 5000 years. Whereas they previously performed domestic duties, looking after children, weaving, managing some of the farm work, today, many rural women move between the village and the cities, some forced to manage the farms left behind by their husbands, others are forced to migrate to cities to find employment to support family members, which are 'left behind' – mainly the sick, the young and the aged. Both groups of women suffer social and structural discrimination. Those women in farm-based villages now perform up to 70% of farm labour,[4] in addition to their traditional burden of caring for dependents. Migrant women of the 'floating population' between rural and urban locations, comprising over 102 million in 2019,[5] on the other hand, face discrimination in housing, employment, personal life, and through government regulations that favour city dwellers. Whether living in the villages or cities, they have little education, are overworked, underpaid, and have few legal protections. Yet, there are still very few channels through which they can voice their concerns or seek social justice.

Since the World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, a number of Non-Govermental Organisations (NGO) have been established in China with the aim of advancing women's equality, including the status of rural women living both 'at home' and in the cities. These NGOs work with the All-China Women's Federation, or 'Fulian', a hierarchical, top-down, government organization which also has NGO status. Unlike 'Fulian', many of the new NGOs have undertaken women and development projects modelled on United Nations development for women programs. Designed to investigate the lives, needs and desires of rural women and to enhance women's capabilities in the new market driven economy,

1 Xie Lihua: Interview 2011.
2 The research data was collected on a field trip to Beijing in 2011 when Professor Kay Schaffer and I were working on the book 'Women Writers in Postsocialist China'. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of Professor Kay Schaffer to this research output.
3 NBSC 2017; Ming Lu, Yiran Xia: Migration in the People's Republic of China; Rachel Murphy (ed.): Labour Migration and Social Development in Contemporary China.
4 Xie Lihua: China's Rural Women: Suicide Report, p. 4; Zhiping Wu: An Investigation of Chinese Rural Women's Lives, p. 5.
5 NBSC 2019; Ming Lu, Yiran Xia: Migration in the People's Republic of China.

these NGO organizations offer rare and limited but significant venues in which rural and migrant women's voices can be heard, their problems acknowledged.

One such organization is the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women in Beijing, an organization which Kay Schaffer and I visited twice in 2011, conducting interviews with Xie Lihua, Founding Member and Board Director, and Wu Zhiping, Director of the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women, as well as several staff members and volunteers. The grass roots work of the Center stands virtually alone as an urban-based organization with a mission to improve the lives of rural and migrant women in China.

Xie Lihua

Like many of the women researchers whose work focuses on the problems faced by rural women, Founding Director Xie Lihua has direct personal experience of rural life that motivated her career and commitment. Born in Shandong Province in a small village, the second daughter in a family of three children, her life story aligns with many aspects of the dilemmas faced by rural women's dislocated lives, typical of the 'floating' migration movement, when in the 1980s China opened up to the world, millions of labourers from the countryside, became a sea of people floated to the cities for work. In 1957-8, when Xie was five years old, her mother left the village to join her father, who was working in Beijing in the textile industry. Xie Lihua went with her mother, after Xie's maternal grandmother committed suicide by taking rat poisoning. The grandmother had been the first of her grandfather's two wives. After producing two daughters, her husband took a second wife, who also had two daughters. It was a time of famine, her grandmother received no support from her former husband or from her other relatives, and she took her own life as a sign of her desperation. Her grandmother's suicide provided a life-long lesson for Xie who only escaped the fate of village girls and women of 'floating' migration by accident, when she was relocated to the city with her mother. Once in Beijing, she took advantage of opportunities unavailable to her counterparts, having access to health care and education, and eventually established a career as a journalist. She has devoted her career to working on behalf of rural women for twenty years.

In her career as a journalist for the 'China Women's Daily' newspaper, Xie rose quickly through the ranks, eventually becoming the Deputy Editor-in-Chief. While working on the newspaper in 1992, Xie returned to her hometown of Shandong to talk 'heart-to-heart' with the women there. She reports that, "in my adulthood, I have become one of Beijing's residents, but the moment I set foot on the soil of my hometown, I hear the rich village sounds and taste our local food, I truly feel that my roots are still deep in the earth of the village".[6] Accustomed to top down directives, the village women initially would not speak. She only gradually won their trust as a former village 'sister'. Ever cognisant that but for an accident of fate, she could have been one of these women, living in poverty

6 Xie Lihua: Blog.

and oppressed conditions, she recorded their lives, mainly for a city audience which scorned them. Xie, who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 and awarded with a US women's leadership prize by Hillary Clinton, devoted her career to working with rural women. Her leadership and initiative led to the publication of the magazine 'Rural Women Knowing All' (now 'Rural Women') in 1993 and the establishment of the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women in 2001.

'Rural Women Knowing All'

In receipt of financial aid from overseas donor organizations like the Ford Foundation, Oxfam and the Global Fund for Women, it began its life in 1993 in the build-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) with the publication 'Rural Women Knowing All' [Nongjianü Baishitong] (now 'Rural Women'), a magazine dedicated to migrant women living and working temporarily in the cities. The magazine is a rare publication, which enables women to tell their stories and have those stories circulated, creating a network amongst the women and a platform to have their concerns voiced, their claims respected and legitimated. The magazine features articles about education, employment, adjusting to life in the cities, legal rights and government policies. Directed towards a readership of women aged between 16 and 45 with at least primary school education, a majority of whom belong to the 'floating population' of rural workers seeking employment in the cities, it regularly publishes stories submitted by rural women.

Many articles concern the exodus of young women from the country, as so many rural workers leave home for the cities in pursuit of employment opportunities. Articles counsel women about their protections from exploitation and sexual harassment in the workplace and limited chances of employment for rural women who sometimes turn to prostitution in the cities for their income in lieu of legitimate work beyond their reach; others discuss difficulties women face with the 'one child policy' and the fate of girls born to mothers in a patriarchal culture – including illness, depression, despair and suicide; still others document the neglect of public or institutional acknowledgement of the dignity of women's lives, particularly those voiceless and impoverished women living in the country.

In 1997 the magazine announced a themed issue entitled "Is there hope in the 'land of hope'?". It solicited comments and stories from rural women for publication in this special issue. The volume drew a heated and unexpected response. Overwhelmingly, women wrote of the legacy of discrimination against women, bemoaning their humble destiny in families that deny girls education, marry them off without regard to their wishes, leaving them under the authority of their often-brutal husbands. Many women wrote of how they despised their lives from birth. They were living without hope.

In 1999 the magazine sponsored a short story contest on the topic of 'My Life as a Migrant Worker', which drew some 300 stories from rural migrant women. The contest, although confined by government policies and regulations

on publication, afforded women some recognition through prizewinning and publication.

The stories detail the plight of rural women, some as young as 15, who migrate to the city in search of employment. The women experience hardship, poverty, exploitation, sexual abuse, and contempt from their employers. They have no working or housing rights and few legal protections. In addition, they regularly suffer prejudice from city dwellers, who condemn them as 'prostitutes.'[7] Many attempted suicides to escape their plight. Zhou Rencong, the winner of this short story competition, comments, "Literature has been my support through all the hard times".[8]

Several of these stories were translated into English and appeared in the online sociological journal, 'Intersections', as well as in a social science text, 'On the Move: Women and Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China',[9] providing the material basis for a western feminist analysis of Chinese migrant women's lives. The stories detail the young women's sense of alienation in the city, their difficulties and hardships with employers, and their problems with domestic violence. Although mainly written to a 'rites of passage' structure with formulaic, upbeat endings that conform with the acceptable political rhetoric of progress, they nonetheless, in the words of the editors, allow women a voice and a forum for relating their own personal experience which "helps to counteract the urban elite disdain for rural migrants as faceless hordes and [...] encourages empathy for rural women as individual human beings with difficulties, desires, and aspirations much like 'ours'".[10]

The magazine continues to publish rural women's oral histories, some of which have been selected into anthologies for publication, enabling wider distribution. One of these, 'Zhongguo nongcun funü: qinggan zishu' ['China's Rural Women: Telling how they Feel'],[11] opens with a preface that calls attention to the importance of this work, not only for the advancement of rural women but for the progress of the nation as a whole. Acknowledging the difficulties of the task, the editor's comment on the long tradition of Chinese patriarchal culture that denies women their basic rights. They praise the anthology as a contribution to this liberating work.

While in the Chinese mainstream media it is rare to report the lives of the 'floating' population the oral histories collected by the magazine stand out to give voices to the silent rural women. The editor locates the book within the international tide of feminism and name the rural women as subjects of human or civil rights and charge the nation with the responsibility for recognizing the oppressive conditions that limit rural women's lives. Utilizing the language of rights and disadvantage familiar in Gender and Development literature, the editors

7 The presumption is that without the protection of fathers or husbands, these 'independent' women are 'de facto' immoral, whether or not they turn to sex work to earn a living.
8 Kay Schaffer, Xianlin Song: Unruly Spaces, p. 22.
9 Ariane Gaetano, Tamara Jacka: On the Move – Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China.
10 Ibid., p. 281.
11 Rongchang Zheng, et al.: China's Rural Women.

focus on the poverty of rural women, emphasizing the need for the dominant society to listen to the voices of disadvantage for the benefit of all social groups.

Another important publication by the magazine is 'Zhongguo nongcun funü: zisha baogao' [China's Rural Women: Suicide Report] (1999) which was the first serious investigation of the issue of suicide of rural women. Edited by Xie Lihua, who had been affected by the suicide of her own grandmother in the country, the report is divided into two parts.

The first part of the publication seeks to explore the reasons behind the exceptionally high suicide rate of rural women. During the period of 1990 to 1994, the death rate by suicide in China ranks second to that of heart related illness, an average of some 324,711 per year.[12] While international literature indicates that the male suicide rate is globally recorded as higher than the female suicide rate, however, in China the reverse is true as female suicide rate is much higher than that of the male population. The number of rural women suicides amounts to more than 170,000 per year.[13]

Xie Lihua's 'Suicide Report' is the first document that gives voices to the young rural women who are driven to attempt suicide. Up to that point these women's voices had been silenced and excluded from the mainstream media, just as they had been ignored by sociological studies in contemporary China. Xie's investigation shows that apart from the thousand years old Confucian ideology which relegates women to inferior social status, the widening gaps between cities and the country and rich and poor in contemporary China have exacerbated the desperation of rural women. When forced to move to cities to find jobs to make a living, rural female migrant workers increasingly face the breaking down of family structures and are even further relegated to the margins of society.

The second part of this suicide report documents some twenty cases of suicide by rural women which have previously appeared in the magazine of 'Rural Women'. These heart-wrenching stories detail issues that go beyond personal tragedy. Arranged marriages, domestic violence, traditional shackles of chastity, Confucian demands of filial piety towards mother-in-laws, depression caused by social isolation, compounded by the current social environment of discrimination against rural residents, cultural expectations of getting rich or being glorious, and lack of legal protection in government policies, all contribute to a network of oppression for this most marginalised social group. With little formal education, suicide is within such cultural social contexts often "taken as an act of revenge in a moral and spiritual sense".[14] Xie Lihua pertinently asks the question "why they are driven to take their own lives".[15] Suicide, for these women, has become the ultimate rebellion and revenge against collective oppression and victimization, especially when they are geographically dislocated, culturally discriminated and socially disadvantaged.

12 Xie Lihua: China's Rural Women, p. 3.
13 Ibid.
14 Meng Liu: Rebellion and revenge, p. 300.
15 Xie Lihua: China's Rural Women.

Beijing Cultural Development Center for Rural Women

The Center itself was established in August 2001, opened by the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). In addition to the magazine 'Rural Women',[16] the Center manages a range of services for rural women, including night schools offering skills training for migrant women, practical training centers and capacity-building programs for village women conducted in Beijing, legal aid services and a women's hostel. It hosts national forums on migrant women's issues and runs a blogsite and a hotline – all with an office staff of fifteen workers, aided by several dozen additional volunteers, servicing a target population of some 400 million women. Voted by the Chinese News Weekly as the 'most responsible' NGO in China in 2005, the Center has a mission to "help rural women to establish independent, equitable and happy life", to "develop the capabilities of rural women, protect their rights, and nurture organisations for rural women".[17]

The Center has published many volumes directed to the needs of migrant women living in the cities, some are self-help manuals and some are collections of stories: one concerns domestic workers, 'Toushi: Jiazhenggong' [A Lens on Domestic Workers] (2008); another reports on the lives of dagongmei (young migrant rural women working as manual labourers, known in China as 'working sisters'): 'Xunmeng: Zhongguo dagongmei baogao' [Pursuing Dreams: a report of dagongmei] (2009); and the most recent, 'Wode Shengyu Gushi' [My Reproductive Story] (2010), addresses male preference and the 'one child policy' in China. These collections provide a variety of first-person narratives, followed by commentaries. Addressed to domestic workers, they give instruction on how to handle difficulties, provide legal advice, and offer solutions to problems ranging from sexual harassment, physical abuse, accusations of stealing, rights to privacy, protections against injuries and salary disputes. Each of the three volumes provides a range of experiences that highlight the need for migrant women workers to be educated about their rights. Intended to engender hope and confidence, the volumes offer a self-help approach. They utilize stories previously published in the magazine 'Rural Women'. Proceeding didactically, in the form of a guidebook, they present a story, followed by a discussion about how the problem might be addressed. In the volume which addresses the dreams and aspirations of migrant manual labourers, the commentaries highlight stereotypes attributed to migrants and contempt of city dwellers, traumas of living an invisible existence in the city, and the like. The third volume, 'Wode Shengyu Gushi' [My Reproductive Story] (2010), focuses on women's reproductive lives, and deals with the impact on women of the demand to produce male babies. The stories lay bare the approbation, abuse, loss of status and humiliation meted out to women without sons, and the risks that women take to ensure that they do have sons. It opens with a preface, directed in part to the women themselves, in part to an audience of city readers, that identifies women's inexperience in sexual matters

16 'Rural women' magazine has since been under the control of All Chinese Women's Federation, no longer run by the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women, and consequently changed the focus of the magazine Xie Lihua established.

17 Beijing Cultural Development Center for Rural Women.

and vulnerability in the cities as a problem of patriarchal social structures and women's lack of knowledge and opportunity, and not low 'suzhi' (inner quality), as the media and common prejudice would maintain. The texts emphasize the need for rural women's self-improvement and empowerment, while also calling for an 'affirmation of their humanity' from city readers.

Wu Zhiping, a retiree who volunteers at the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women, has facilitated in producing several ethnographic studies that highlight the changes in women's lives under the new economic reforms. Wu Zhiping's 'Zhongguo Xiangcun Funü Shenghuo Diaocha: Suizhou Shijiao' [An Investigation of Chinese Rural Women's Lives: Suizhou Perspective] (2008) focuses on the kaleidoscopic changes in the lives of women in the small village of Ye in Suizhou, Hubei Province, population of 1491. Having lived with the women from Ye Village for four years, Wu presents her first-hand experience of the lives of village women as a basis for expounding urgent social issues. She studies the consequences of the shift away from the 'Nangeng nüzhi' (men till, women weave) mode of rural production, to the 'Nangong nügeng' (men labour, women till) mode. Formerly a CCP Party official in charge of Suizhou city's Propaganda department, Wu began this research project investigating the predicament rural women face after being forced into an early retirement.

'Investigation of Chinese Rural Women's Lives' opens with a preface by Xu Yong (2008), a male professor of Rural Society, entitled "The changes concerning rural women who are 'not counted as humans'" (不算人). His title refers to the traditional attitude of not recognizing rural women, as a category, as having any significance in village life. His title is prompted by the name given to Wu's first chapter of the study, "Are there no *ren* [Humans / People] in the Countryside?" It refers to a phone conversation between Wu Zhiping and the village CCP secretary. Explaining her desire to investigate rural women in the country, the Party Secretary responded: "there are no *ren* in the countryside, what do you want to come here for?" When Wu persisted, he responded that "all the young and able-bodied ones have gone out to *dagong* [do manual work], only the aged, women and children are left behind".[18] In China, those people left in the village with the departure of the able-bodied 'floating population' are often referred to as the '38 61 99 army' (signifying women, children, and the aged).[19] The Preface, a typical feature of studies published in China, written by Xu Yong, goes some way towards bolstering the legitimacy of Wu's position under the imprimatur of a distinguished male intellectual. In the website of the book currently still available, Xu notes "Rural women studies is still virgin territory yet to be developed. Peasants live the hardest lives under heaven, those who suffer the most are rural women. [...] Rural women are creating a history we must record".[20] Wu Zhiping's

18 Yong Xu: Foreword, n. pag.

19 38 61 99 signifies women, children and the aged in the following way: 38 is a shortcut term that refers to the 3rd of March, International Women's Day; 61 refers to the 1st of June, International Children's Day; and 99, refers to the numeral 9, which in Chinese is a homonym for 'long', as in longevity, referring those who have lived a long time. The issue of left-behind children (numbering 69.7 million) is a direct consequence of migrant women in China, see Tong et al.: The factors associated with being left-behind children in China, n. pag.

20 Yong Xu: Foreword, n. pag.

study is unique in that she lived with the so-called '38 61 99 army', participating in the life of the village and collecting stories of village life from the women. Partly funded by the UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the Chinese Ministry of Education, the oral histories collected by Wu Zhiping highlight dilemmas faced by rural women still living in the country.

As the former Chairperson of Suizhou Writers' Association, Wu writes in a polished and highly readable style. Her narratives are steeped in the particulars of everyday life of Ye Village's women: their local customs, emotional and physical struggles, their dreams for a better future and early attempts at village governance. She reports that the number one problem identified by the village women she interviewed is sexual loneliness. Given traditional reticence women have on speaking about their private lives, this is perhaps a surprising confession. It has significant consequences, however. The absence of husbands as sexual partners has led to new social and sexual arrangements in villages, where elder men take it upon themselves to 'service' the women and are sometimes exchanged between the younger wives. This has led not only to a breakdown of traditional family structures but also of traditional Confucian morality. Wu delineates the moral and social costs of these major changes in society, including the abortion and abandonment of girl babies, the increasing sexual abuse of children who are left behind in the countryside with their grandparents by their parents who have gone to the cities to work, the misery of motherhood for widowed or abandoned mothers, and the spread of HIV-AIDS among the poor people, which is not only on the rise because of new sexual arrangements but also because of rural poverty which prompts villagers to attempt to make a living by selling blood.[21]

Wu's prominence as a former Deputy Head of the CCP's Suizhou Department of Propaganda shapes the production, reception, and circulation of the text. Framed within traditional Chinese didactic discursive practices, the text is peppered with photographs of seemingly healthy, happy villagers engaged in a range of productive activities: schooling, mothering, doing craft and farm work, engaged in communal and personal relationships and involved in self-improvement activities, all designed to render a positive image of rural lives. Published by a prominent literary publisher in Wuhan, with an initial print run of 30,000 copies, her mediation of the lives of Ye Village women in Hubei Province has wide circulation. Yet, in her preface, she presents the stories as literature, not sociology out of necessity mainly to avoid political attention, and in her conclusions, she is careful to outline measures taken by the government to assist women in the rural areas. Her study transforms the stories into narratives of self-improvement. In addition, Wu's former official status and that of the publishing house have the potential to garner acceptance for and lend credibility to the conditions of rural women's lives, albeit within officially acceptable parameters. In this way the actual 'Investigation of Chinese Rural Women's Lives' serves to raise the profile of rural women and foster greater understanding of their plight, thereby giving a voice

21 Ai Xiaoming, one of the country's leading social activists, works with poor girls in the south. In one of many campaigns, she filmed appeals of girls who contracted HIV after giving blood and the rebuff of government officials to their claims for acknowledgement and compensation.

to the voiceless, in a society in which these people are 'not counted' as 'ren' and their plight is largely under the political carpet

Many of the Center's publications investigate specific problems faced by rural women. They carry a sociological apparatus, proceeding by way of interviews, oral histories, participant observation and focus groups. Some offer statistical data on demographics, questionnaires, flow charts, and the like. Their discussion and analysis differ, however, from standard western social science texts. Apart from highlighting social issues and offering generalized advice to the women, there is little examination of the social and economic conditions that structure the women's lives, no critique of underlying social conditions and economic structures or recommendations for policy development or action. The empowerment of women and capacity building approach affirms the humanity of rural women. In accentuating women's 'good qualities' – their strength, endurance, resilience, and the like, the research collections underscore rural women's individual responsibility rather than their collective identity and places the burden of change on *their* shoulders. In this it engages with a universalist discourse, stressing the women's similarity with city dwellers rather than delineating their differences or examining the underlying social structures, patriarchal traditions and prejudices that produce difference. The texts produced by the Center collectively address the disparity between rural and urban, poor and wealthy, traditional and modern lives in that they conduct action research with rural women, both in the villages and for migrant women in the cities.

With China increasing its pace to enter the global arena, the grass-root work by 'Rural Women' magazine and the Center has had positive flow-on effects in terms of drawing the public attention to China's most marginalised social group. Many overseas scholars and researchers have participated in the Center's activities and followed its steps to make the voices of rural women heard. Apart from the research in 'On the Move: Women and Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China'[22] which published a number of the oral narratives of 'working sisters', the stories collected by Leslie Chang and Tiantian Zheng also contribute to the activist work to bring to light the conditions of rural women, creating channels, though limited, for their concerns to be acknowledged. Leslie Chang, a Chinese-American journalist for the 'Wall Street Journal', travelled to China to interview factory girls living in the cities in order to put a human face to the terrible conditions of factory life that had been reported in her newspaper. She spent two years following two village girls, Min and Chunming, working in Dongguan, a factory town close to Shenzhen. Her study 'Factory Girls: Voices from the Heart of Modern China' (2008) reports on their lives, imagining their internalized worlds, before detailing her own family story of farming life in China in the early twentieth century. She notes parallels between the past and the present; in particular, the reticence of Chinese people to talk about their sufferings. At the same time, she poignantly portrays the sacrifices and compromises that modern Chinese migrant girls must make to survive.

22 Arianne Gaetano, Tamara Jacka (eds.): On the Move.

Another ethnographic account, 'Red Lights', by Tiantian Zheng (2009) documents the US-based scholars' ethnographic research in the north-eastern seaport town of Dalian, one of China's new "special economic zones". Zheng, a native of Dalian, returned to the city in 2000 on a PhD scholarship from Yale. She embedded herself as a hostess at a karaoke bar, living and working with the hostesses and forming close bonds with them, as part of her two-year participant observation study. She details the creative self-fashioning of the young women as they move from 'country bumpkins' to modern urbanites, struggling to maintain their personal dignity and autonomy in the face of cruelty, corruption, degradation and the official Chinese socialist morality of the state. Her sympathetic study does not moralize. To the contrary, she asserts that hostessing, which, in the main, entails not prostitution per se but sexual services, including entertainment, singing, dancing, drinking, and fondling,[23] is the only venue available to migrant women to enable them an opportunity to secure a status with urbanites, acquire access to influential male business and political networks, and support themselves and their village families on wages that far exceed those of other migrant workers.[24] In other words, the women engage in hostessing as a means to an end of material and social advancement, often opening their own businesses or becoming 'second wives' of businessmen or politicians. In her complex analysis, Zheng studies not only the lives of her subjects but also the ways in which the performances and repertoires of femininity and masculinity are mutually constituted in the space of the karaoke bar and how hierarchies of social status, mediated by class and gender, are negotiated and reconstituted in its competitive, hypermasculine atmosphere. As Harriet Evans notes, Zheng not only challenges traditional prejudices concerning sex workers but also offers a cogent critique of the collusion between sex work, entrepreneurial capital and state power, and "young migrant women and emasculated men converge in sustaining a sex industry that serves the interests of patriarchal state system".[25]

In different ways the stories of village and migrant life translated and published in Gaetano and Jacka's 'On the Move', Chang's journalistic account of factory workers in Shenzhen, and Zheng's ethnographic study of hostesses in Dalian's karaoke bars all deepen our understanding of the constraining and enabling features of the new market economy for rural and migrant women. These studies convey to an English-speaking audience the human face of the conditions endured by the legions of young women who are powering China's economic boom.

Since the New Cultural Movement in the 20th century, Women's status in China has been tied to the nation's progress. In their appeal to the audience, contemporary sociologists and women's advocates repeat this familiar ideological move, one re-iterated in the Maoist era dictum 'women hold up half of the sky' as implied equality. By contrast, the recent publications discussed here emerge

23 However, in 2004 at a time of economic slump, the bars changed their policies, demanding that the hostesses dance nude and fondle their clients to test their reactions, an alarming trend that only enhances the exploitation of the women, Tiantian Zheng: Red Lights, p. 244.
24 Ibid., pp. 179 ff.
25 Ibid., p. 227.

from women-centered sociological critiques and grassroots action research that is grounded in the actual needs and experiences of the women themselves. The moral imperative made by researchers to the larger public to listen, acknowledge, and take responsibility for the predicament of rural women has another valence. It emerges out of a gendered analysis of social relations, adopting the discourse of international feminism utilized by United Nations' sponsored Gender and Development programs and adapting it to national programs for action. This approach extends the local reach of rural women's stories to the global reach of feminist networks within and outside of China. Its effectiveness as a neo-liberal strategy for improving the lives of rural women, however, has several disabling effects. It exists within the hierarchal and authoritarian forms of governmentality, which runs counter to public discourses like 'suzhi' that operate within China to separate rural from urban dwellers and discriminate between them on the basis of their country registration, and it makes its appeal mainly to the moral conscience of urban dwellers in an era characterized by increasing amorality and economic self-interest.

Conclusion

The work of the Cultural Development Center for Rural Women led by Xie Lihua extends the reach of advocacy, documenting the issues faced by women living in the cities as part of the 'floating population', enabling them to write their own stories, using their voices to offer advice in the form of self-help manuals, and reporting on women's needs as a way of maintaining pressure on the government in a time of new economic reforms. The emergence of these narratives by and about rural women makes it possible for readers in China and beyond her borders to contextualize differences between rural and urban-based women, aid understanding of the consequences of massive structural change, evoke empathy for women's difficulties, and advocate on their behalf, sometimes with state support, sometimes in grass roots sites of 'gender training'.[26] The advocacy work of the Center provides rare venues which amplify the voices of the voiceless, create new areas of activism, spur calls for gender equality, individualize and humanize the rural women about whom so little is known, and provide contexts in which they can develop their own agency and autonomy.[27] In this sense, the work of the Center contributes to the 'unruly spaces' of Indigenous feminism unique in contemporary China.[28]

Yes, there are many blank spaces yet to be filled in, especially in regard to the destabilization of traditional social structures and the cultural impact of those structural changes, including the degeneration of family life in the villages, the

26 See Zheng Wang, Ying Zhang: Global Concepts, Local Practices.

27 Sharon Wesoky: Chinese Feminism Faces Globalization and Zheng Wang, Ying Zhang: Global Concepts, Local Practices all note that much of the advocacy on behalf of rural women that has taken place since 1992 would not be called 'feminist' in China but rather couched in Women and Development terms like 'gender mainstreaming', or 'gender equality'.

28 See Kay Schaffer, Xianlin Song: Unruly Spaces.

sexual abuse of children, and the alarmingly high rate of women's suicides. In addition, there are many ideological barriers to women's equality which are unrecognized by the State, especially when Chinese official policies and practices in the countryside regard male as heads of household, which make it exceedingly difficult for women to play a significant decision-making role in the management of farms and village life.[29]

The new representational frames offered by sociologists, women's organizations, the Center for Rural Women's Development, and feminist researchers within China and overseas, nonetheless, extend the discursive domains through which rural women gain affirmation and validation for their lives. Juxtaposed against barriers of resistance, stereotype, othering, and marginalization through 'suzhi' discourse – all of which serve to justify neglect by city counterparts and government policy makers, the writings by, for and about rural women enable their voices to be heard and their concerns acknowledged, challenging traditional belief systems and opening up to readers new channels of critical responsiveness to rural people in general, and rural women in particular. The fate of rural women in contemporary China will serve as a measure of the civilisational state of its time.

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Philip Mead

Kenneth Slessor, Film Writing, and Popular Culture

The prolific journalistic work of Kenneth Slessor (1901-1971) provides a valuable case study in the history of print culture in mid-twentieth century Australia, as well as a rich chronicle of the evolution of the cinema over the same period. It is also a significant aspect of the corpus of Slessor's writing that has gone largely unnoticed. Slessor's film writing is a record of a talented writer's role in mediating popular print culture's relations to adjacent cultural institutions of cinema, like live theatre, literature, music and visual art. All this writing was informed by an acute awareness of the new medium of cinema's relations to everyday life and by subjective considerations of national and international networks of film production, distribution and reception. Slessor's intermedial writing within the genres and production values of daily and weekly journalism was a way of representing and commenting on theatre performance, moving image and social life in a medium other than that in which they were experienced.

Slessor's working life as a journalist involved a constant and intense experience of modern Australian cultural life, typically in the city, from the 1920s to the 1940s at a time when newspapers were a dominant medium of orchestrating social, cultural and political life, with a large variety of genres and styles that would later shift into other media. This was an era when journalistic writing generally didn't use by-lines, except when certain privileged forms within the medium of the newspaper allowed the recognition of an authorial presence – 'special' writers. Slessor's journalism from the beginning of his career spanned the full range of anonymous and named or signed writing. The record of this writing is a copious archive of how cultural life was visualized, interpreted and translated through the medium of print in twentieth-century Australia.

While literary history has been relatively codified from early on, given its definitional usefulness to a nationalising culture, the history of journalism and film writing in Australia, though it is from a later era, has been much less systematic, often scattered and intermittent. Tom O'Regan and Huw Walmsley-Evans have usefully characterised the emergence of film criticism in Australia as a staged history, beginning with the moment of "independent commentary" from the late teens and 1920s, when the "discourse on film in daily newspapers broke with publicity and the incidental news item to create independent views and short comment upon films".[1]

This is the moment in which Slessor first starts to write about films for the newspapers where he worked – still the silent era of course. Slessor's chief period of film writing, though, belongs to what O'Regan and Walmsley-Evans describe as the following period or the 'film as film' moment when film criticism that "attended to film as a medium or art-form in its own right" emerged, and film

1 Tom O'Regan, Huw Walmsley-Evans: The Emergence of Australian Film Criticism, p. 297.

reviewing became a "more defined form of cultural expression requiring new tasks and competencies of journalists".[2] The coming of sound in 1929 was a defining aspect of this stage. This was also the case for film writing in the tradition of literary journalism, a more expansive journalistic style in terms of vocabulary, description and judgement associated with writing about books, art, theatre, and culture generally.[3] Film reviewers and critics who, roughly contemporaneous with Slessor and who have helped to establish this 'film as film' moment in Australia, included Lalie Seton Cray in 'The Triad', Erle Cox at 'The Argus', Josephine O'Neill at 'The Daily Telegraph', and Beatrice Tildesley writing for the 'Women's Weekly'. Slessor's film writing belongs to this under-recorded and still largely archival world of literary production.

While Slessor is one of the most prominent of Australian poets, with selected and collected poetry volumes as well as substantial scholarly and critical attention to his work, his film writing and other journalism has been of little interest to literary scholars. Indeed film writing, generally, of which there have been some outstanding practitioners in Australia has received next to no attention from literary historians and critics. Likewise, Slessor's extensive reviewing of film and coverage of the film industry and distribution, national and international, has hardly been noticed in the history of Australian journalism or in Media Studies and cinema history. Slessor's film writings reveal much more than the melancholy poet of Elizabeth Bay and Australia's maritime history; in his film writing he appears as a sparkling humourist, a satirist, a cultural omnivore, a master of irony, and as encyclopaedically knowledgeable about film genres and production, and about film's adaptations of literature, music and theatre. Perhaps most importantly he was also uniquely situated, historically, to witness first-hand the development of cinema in Australia, from its early silent beginnings to the advent of sound and the golden age of Hollywood movies, and the emergence of a national cinema.

'Smith's Weekly''s, where Slessor concentrates on writing about film, had a unique place over its life as a newspaper, from 1919 to 1950, in Australia and New Zealand, as a weekly paper with a genuine Australasian distribution. Styling itself as the 'diggers' paper' it was often racist, sexist and xenophobic, but it also valued good writing, supported the work of many black-and-white artists and offered lively discussions of politics, theatre, horse-racing, boxing, publishing, and issues of relevance to returned service men. And Slessor's comprehensive and insightful writing for 'Smith's' about film was a highlight of that newspaper's chronicling of the media, nationally. It represents one of the most vital and complex documents of mid-twentieth century Australian culture by a writer who was recognized as one of Australia's most accomplished poets, but who was also completely at home in the medium of an unashamedly popular newspaper. Its value lies in the power and quality of Slessor's writing, in its weekly chronicling of the experience of moviegoing, and annual documenting of movie production

2 Ibid., p. 302.
3 Ibid., p. 303.

in its formative century, and in the distinctively Australian experience and development of a popular cultural form.

Slessor began his working life as a journalist as a cadet on the Sydney 'Sun' in 1918, having left school, at the age of 17, after completing his Leaving Certificate. He was clearly attracted to the world of journalism, also enrolling that year in a shorthand course at the Sydney Metropolitan Business College.[4] He was already an established poet, having published poems as a schoolboy in the 'Bulletin' in July 1917 and in 1918, a poem "France – 1918", that won the international 'Victoria League' poetry prize. Slessor learnt his trade as a journalist on the 'Sun', an evening broadsheet paper, notable for its technological innovations in design and production and its coverage of crime, human interest and entertainment. Slessor covered rounds of all kinds, but also contributed signed columns about a range of topics such as city life, suburbia, mythology, and in a variety of styles, sometimes serious, sometimes satirical, as well as original poems. Some of these poems, like "Threatenings" and "Two Nocturnes", were later included in his first collection, 'Thief of the Moon', published in 1924 – "In sphery Morse, the little planets wink" ("Two Nocturnes"). Over this period when Slessor was working at the 'Sun' it published weekly (Sunday) columns about books of the day and a page of film features, film reviews and news of Sydney theatre attractions. This section of the paper was headed, referencing Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam, 'The Moving Row of Magic Shadow Shapes'.[5] Slessor is likely to have written for both these book columns and film pages. It is also worth noting that Slessor was mentored by Frank Marien, his editor at the 'Sun' and later at 'Smith's', until his unexpected death in July 1936 when he was editor at 'Smith's'. Marien was obsessed with film and had a wide circle of friends and colleagues in the Sydney film world. As a "skilled mechanical engineer" Marien built an 80-seat theatrette, including full-sized picture projector and sound equipment at his home in Miranda, south of Sydney where he held regular screenings.[6]

In this period of Slessor's life, when he married Noela Senior (1922), and was establishing himself as an accomplished journalist, he was also actively involved in the Sydney literary and artistic world. He was connected to Sidney Ure Smith's 'Art in Australia' and also belonged to a literary Bohemian set around Norman Lindsay, including his son Jack, Robert D. FitzGerald and Hugh McCrae. With Jack Lindsay and Frank C. Johnson, Slessor edited the four issues of 'Vision: A Literary Quarterly' from 1923 to 1924. This journal was mainly a vehicle for Norman Lindsay's art and ideas but also included an interview with Lindsay where Slessor introduced the idea of an Australian film industry.[7]

4 Geoffrey Dutton: Kenneth Slessor. A Biography, p. 27.

5 The full stanza from Fitzgerald's 'Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyam' reads: We are no other than a row | Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go | Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held | In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

6 Slessor mentions this cinematic enthusiasm of Marien's in his obituary in 'Smith's' on 25 July 1936, p. 2; his rhetorical control in this obituary is typical of his skill, as well as learning: "I did not think that at any time I should write an article like this about Frank Marien. The role of a Bossuet is as distasteful to most newspapermen as that of a Boswell. A calling which systematises the simulation of public emotion makes the discussion of personal emotion the more painful".

7 See Kenneth Slessor: An Interview with Norman Lindsay, pp. 8-19.

In late 1924 the newly appointed editor of Melbourne 'Punch', John Bede Dalley, invited Slessor to join the newspaper as chief sub-editor.[8] Slessor went to live in Melbourne and to work for a paper that had been running since 1855, originally one of the most successful colonial imitations of London 'Punch'. Dalley's revived 'Punch' advertised itself around the country as a newspaper of national scope. For this paper, Slessor wrote about and reviewed, on the 'Plays, Music and Art' page, and often very amusingly, the range of Melbourne theatrical and musical events, as well as reviews, melodramas, and films. Slessor's immersion in the world of Melbourne theatrical culture includes attention to genre, representation of character, knowledge of music and musical performance, the hackneyed done well, and a keen awareness of the audience's reactions, all of which he carried over into his writing about the cinema for 'Smith's Weekly'. There is also an instance of Slessor's serious literary interests reflected in the publication in 'Punch' of a paper he delivered to the Melbourne University Literary Society. This paper, on "The Great Australian Mausoleums" was about the "menace of the orthodox" in Australian poetry, epitomized for him in anthologies like the 'Oxford Book of Australian Verse', edited by Walter Murdoch, and Bertram Stevens's 'An Anthology of Australian Verse'.[9] In this serious literary vein Slessor also published an initialled review in the Christmas Day issue of 'Punch' for 1924 of Sir Robert Garran's translation of Heine's poetry, 'Heine's Book of Songs'.[10] In this review Slessor displayed not just his admiration of Heine's poetry but also his familiarity with Heine scholarship and translation, with mention of the "creditable, standard" translations of Heine by Thomas Brooksbank and Margaret Armour. Slessor's own poem "Heine in Paris" was written in this year and included in his second collection of poems 'Earth-Visitors' (1926). As a sub-editor, Slessor would have undoubtedly worked closely with these aspects of the paper's production and the film and theatre pages certainly represented a serious and detailed coverage of film and theatre by 'Punch'. It also included articles like C.J. Dennis's long feature of 21 May 1925 "Australia and the Films", about the economics of production and exhibition, and Australian vs American movie production companies.

By early August 1926, though, Slessor was back in Sydney, working at the 'Sun', and within a year he had moved to 'Smith's Weekly', in the latter half of 1927. Before Slessor became heavily involved in film reviewing he wrote a feature article "Round Australia with the Bestsellers",[11] a partly comic geographizing of national readership, and the first appearance of this kind of cultural notice in the newspaper. Slessor describes Australia's "zones of reading":

> If an expert were asked to draw up a list of the favourite reading of the various State capitals, it would amount to something like this: Sydney: Guide to Form, telephone directories, railway time-tables, "The Income Tax Explained" and Edgar Wallace; Melbourne: "The Quiver," "The Sunday at Home," "The Rearing of Guinea-pigs," "Collected Sermons by the Rev. Dundreary," and "Fifty Tours Out

8 Geoffrey Dutton: Kenneth Slessor. A Biography, p. 88.
9 Kenneth Slessor: The Great Australian Mausoleums, p. 32.
10 Kenneth Slessor: Heine's Music, p. 52.
11 Kenneth Slessor: Round Australia with the Bestsellers, p. 12.

of Melbourne"; Adelaide: "Marius the Epicurean," "Behaviour in Polite Society," "Hints on Etiquette," "The Complete Letter Writer," and "Memoirs of a Dean".[12]

Slessor though didn't go on to curate a books page for 'Smith's', which wasn't a literary publication in the way the 'Bulletin' or the 'Australian Journal' was, but he did write a couple of serious features on both Australian publishing and censorship in 1933.[13] Although Slessor's coverage of a national cultural industry and its component parts would be adapted for his film pages. It wasn't till after World War II, and at a different newspaper, the Sydney 'Daily Telegraph', that Slessor would return to the kind of literary journalism that he wrote briefly at the beginning of his time at 'Smith's'.

Over 1929 'Smith's' marks various aspects of the full arrival of the talkies, beginning with the part-sound film and progressing to the full talking picture. In his first signed feature for 1930, "That Movie Kiss. The Stage Takes the Knock", Slessor described the beginning of the talkies era: "Softly and stealthily, the Revolution came. One day, it was a theory, a dream of men in a laboratory; next morning, before the world could rub its eyes, it was a fact".[14] And again at the beginning of 1931 in his article "A Flashback for 1931 – Looking Over the Talkie-year – Analysis of "Smith's" Barometer" he wrote more hyperbolically about the talkie revolution in the media. In this article, looking back at life B. C. (Before Cinesound), he writes about the broader epochal change he has lived through:

> Another reel has gone into the darkness. We sit in the theatre and look back. By the magic of that little bit of crystal in the camera's eye, the modern Roc's egg, we have gone flying into gulfs and valleys, into tenements and opera-houses, over the spires of cities and the sand of deserts. This is the most charming of all pastimes – looking back. The pleasure is added to when we survey 1930, by the significance of something in the film-world which can only be compared to a sort of French Revolution – the upsetting of accepted standards, and the enthronement of strange gods.
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> Historically the year that has just passed will be a source of delving, and brow-scratching to professors long after the projection-machines of our period have been stored away in museums with zoetropes and magic-lanterns. After ten years of torpor, the Sleeping Beauties of the film woke up and stretched themselves in 1929. That was a time of conjecture and experiment, of panic-stricken readjustment and fabulous prophecy. By this time last year, the changes of sheer mechanism had been more or less perfected. What followed in 1930 were the changes of thought and style, the gradual concessions of an antique dumb-show to the demands of a new and organic art.
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> Think of the early films of this year, and compare them with the pictures reviewed in "Smith's Weekly" this month, and you begin to realise the gulf that has been bridged. It is no exaggeration to say that in the last twelve months there have been more sweeping metamorphoses, more daring experiments, than have been attempted since the days when Edison amused himself with a kinematograph. After 12 months, theories have settled down. The talkie, from being the sport

12 Ibid.

13 For example, "Made in Australia. Publications that Challenge the World. Reasons Behind This Tide of Australian Books. Publishing in Our Own Country has Grown Up" (15 July, 1933, p. 14); "New Australian Books. Publishers Who Are Doing Wonders. Fresh Impulse in National Book-Shops Examined" (22 July 1933, p. 5); "How the Censor Tried to Kick "Bounty" Film": "Had pure-minded Mr Cresswell O'Reilly deliberately set out to exterminate Australian pictures, he could not have done anything more arbitrary or despotic than his efforts to cripple "The Bounty"" (11 March 1933, p. 10).

14 Kenneth Slessor: That Movie Kiss. The Stage Takes the Knock, p. 17.

> of technicians and incendiaries, has become a vehicle almost as orthodox as the sonata. Boundaries have been ruled, laws laid down, an established code of drama has been framed. Perhaps the most noticeable of all these amendments has been the curtailment of dialogue.
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> Intoxicated with their new-found powers, directors of the early talkies indulged in an orgy of conversation. The trend to-day is towards the minimum of sound; unessential voices, unnecessary speech, superfluous words have been eliminated. Audiences are spared the bombardment of dissonance which gave them a headache in that era of exuberance. A capitulation of the history which has been made in 1930 affords a surprising sidelight on the strides of the microphone.[15]

It is also at this point that Slessor's light verse, in poems like "It, If and Also", "Tete-à-Tete" and "The Girl on the Corner", changes to reflect the way in which cinema and the possibilities for enchantment and fantasy that it offers, has become part of people's everyday lives. The other side of the story of the success of the sound film is depicted in "Goodbye – Chorus Lady!" where Slessor dramatises the loss of employment and opportunity for theatre workers, like chorus girls, now that the "Vitaphone bellow[s], | and Only the Magnavox howls".[16] In "Passed by Mr. Cressy O'Reilly" Slessor addresses the issue of state censorship of the movies in a satirical piece about the cutting of a song from the movie 'Paris'.[17] This marks the beginning of Slessor's and 'Smith's' long and personal campaign against Cresswell O'Reilly, the Commonwealth Film Censor in 1925 and then as Chief Censor from 1928 to 1942.[18] Nineteen-thirty also sees the Screenery (sometimes Screen'ry) page of 'Smith's' begin to take on the style and content of the later 'Through 'Smith's' Private Projector' page 'Conducted by Kenneth Slessor.'

What also happens in 1930, at the same time as reviewing is beginning to take its new form, is that an awareness of the possibilities for and obstacles facing local movie production emerges. Reviews sometimes criticised films for their style or narrative, but always bore in mind the audience's responses. The review of 'Common Clay', for example, referred to it as "the best sob-drama in months", but also recognized that it "held its first-night audience from the word go".[19] 'Smith's' also noticed the films of UFA, "the famous German film corporation, which in the days of silent pictures gave Australia many remarkable reels", but what the reviewer draws attention to is UFA's technologies of sound, recognizing German "mechanical superiority" in this regard.[20] For all the often racist elements in 'Smith's' nevertheless Paramount's 1930 film 'The Silent Enemy', about the Ojibwa nation and pre-white settlement of Canada, and using Indigenous actors, is an instance of a review of a silent film which recognizes both its technical and political value: "A slice of primitive life, interpreted by redskins [sic], here is another of the occasional achievements which reveal the amazing scope of the

15 Kenneth Slessor: A Flashback for 1931, p. 21. In this article Slessor goes on to list the other "landmarks of the year" [1930]: "Fox's amalgamation with Hoyt's", the "return of vaudeville and orchestras to the theatres", the "advent of F. W. Thring as a first Australian film producer on a really important scale", the appearance of "many new stars new to the screen", and a long list of "individual scenes that clung to the memory" (ibid.).
16 Kenneth Slessor: Slessor, Kenneth. Goodbye – Chorus Lady!, p. 8.
17 Kenneth Slessor, Passed by Mr. Cressy O'Reilly, p. 7.
18 Ironically, Slessor agreed to an appointment to the National Literature Board of Review (a Commonwealth government censorship board) established in 1967.
19 Kenneth Slessor: Review of Common Clay, p. 7.
20 Ibid.

screen [...] Dialogue has no part in the picture, but none is needed. It is essentially a silent film and a first-class one".[21]

Nineteen-thirty is the year in which Slessor's profile as 'Smith's' leading film reviewer becomes established, in terms of recognition in one of the banners used interchangeably from mid 1930 for the screen page and by the increasingly extended film reviews whose preoccupations, phrases and words were shared with later reviews signed by Slessor. By October 1930 the film page's content and orientation had been stabilised in terms of review length, iconography of ratings, accompanying stories and use of black and white art. Furthermore filmmakers such as Ken Hall referred to Slessor's 'Screenery' reviews from this period before the more formal recognition afforded by the change of banner to "Through 'Smith's' Private Projector conducted by Kenneth Slessor". This reorganisation in March 1931 signals Slessor's role as the principal writer and curating influence behind the film pages. In his reviews Slessor discusses a wide range of formal aspects of film viewing and film making. He is always aware of the genres of film as they are developing over the years of his reviewing, referring to both familiar (the Western) and longstanding genres (melodrama) and at other times to emerging groups of films that he calls film series, such as films set in hotels, on a boat, or train, etc. His reviews also reveal his predilections and foibles in relation to genres, such as his dislike of Westerns and his liking for the Marx Brothers and screwball comedies, and his long-term interest in the musical. This is his review of 'The Saddle Buster' (11 June 1932): "Better name would have been 'Brain Buster' or 'Heartbreaker'. This must be the decrepit last of a series which we had hoped was extinct. Yes, it's another of those broncho-operas, full of the inanities and idiocies which disfigured the screen 20 years ago. The poor old phantom totters on to celluloid again. Last appearance, by request".[22] He also discusses the oeuvres of directors – a favourite is Frank Capra – and his sense of what acting and performance for the sound cinema is – for his favourites are Charles Laughton and Greta Garbo. This is his review of 'Grand Hotel' (MGM) from 8 October 1932:

> 'Grand Hotel' has accomplished the impossible – it has lived up to everything the advertisements have said about it. It is real entertainment revolving around Greta Garbo though most of the honors go to a masterpiece of character acting by Lionel Barrymore. Nothing as good as his portrait of the suburban clerk, elderly and dying, who decides to live in the real sense the last few hours before death has been seen in Australia. Much to his own surprise, however, he finishes up not by dying, but by taking the pretty typist (Joan Crawford) off to Paris, in circumstances which make us rather doubt his innocence.
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> Greta Garbo excels herself in this picture. She has rarely been more convincing, and whereas in the past she has more or less been accepted as a phase in screen-fashions, she readily demonstrates here that she is an actress of a quality that will endure. She rises to supreme heights: and by contrast, Joan Crawford, splendid though she is as the sophisticated typist, becomes merely a good super. Incidentally, this picture reveals Greta Garbo as being exceptionally tall. One did not really appreciate that fact before.

21 Kenneth Slessor: Review of Silent Enemy, p. 7.
22 Kenneth Slessor: Review of The Saddle Buster, p. 21.

> 'Grand Hotel' is merely a page torn out of the book of life. Its charm is in its truth. Nothing is strained to 'get effect'; it is convincing to the last degree. By all means see it.[23]

Slessor is also interested in film adaptations of literary texts throughout his career as a film critic. From 21 March 1931 through to 25 June 1938 Slessor appears as 'Smith's' film pages' editor variously under the heading "Conducted by Kenneth Slessor" or "by Kenneth Slessor". In various versions of the masthead over these years Slessor also appears as a black-and-white illustrated portrait. Sometimes in these film pages the initials K.S. would appear at the end of these reviews. This is the case for some 90 reviews between 28th March 1931 (the first instance of the new masthead "Through Smith's Private Projector Conducted by Kenneth Slessor") and 1938 (the last). In these reviews Slessor often, but not always, used the personal pronoun 'I'. This 'I' was not only to indicate personal views sometimes at odds with the ratings to a film being assigned (based on assessments of enjoyment, popularity and box office potential) but seems often to be used to mix things up in the review format or to 'make acceptable' some interest in the film quite apart from its story. Sometimes whimsical, sometimes acerbic, sometimes simply economical, the 'I' seems to have introduced a more personal touch. But mostly Slessor's reviews on the pages headed "conducted by" or "by" Kenneth Slessor were not signed.

There are noticeable, important aspects of how the film pages change and develop over the decades of Slessor's film reviewing, another reason why it is so useful to see Slessor's signed writing within the journalistic milieu of his unsigned work and the writing of other authors on the pages. The calculus of these changes is in response not only to Slessor's development as a thinker and writer about film, but to external responses by readers and audiences to 'Smith's' project of film commentary. There is a strong residual sense of play-writing and stage performance in Slessor's early 1930s reviewing of film, for example, not surprisingly given his immersion in those cultural forms from his first days as a journalist. One example: "here at last is a motion-talking film ['The Big Trail'] that is something more than a mere photograph stage-show, or a collection of circus riders disguised as cowboys doing picturesque but futile stunts".[24] But this residual reliance on comparisons with stage drops away in favour of recognition of the motion picture series. In the earlier period there is a very strong reliance on judgement and critical acumen, reflected in the constant use of the 'Smith's' Barometer, while in later reviews he seems to develop a more interactive, nuanced relationship to film audiences. A good film, for example, may not be a popular film and he articulates why audiences should appreciate such films. This is about 'Marie Walewska' (1938): "as entertainment it is possibly too good to be what is known as a 'box-office winner' [...] it is sufficiently out of its class and particularly in acting to make us suspect the general public won't go as mad about it as they have over so many MGM films of less absolute worth".[25] It is also noticeable that the film page includes some gradually longer reviews as it develops, allowing

23 Kenneth Slessor: Review of Grand Hotel, p. 18.
24 Kenneth Slessor: Review of The Big Trail, p. 7.
25 Kenneth Slessor: Review of Marie Walewska, p. 23.

Slessor's page to differentiate itself from other reviewing venues (like the 'Sydney Morning Herald'). From 1932 for example, it's not unusual to see reviews of 600-1,000 words, along with reviews of other varying lengths. The greater length of these feature reviews allows films to be highlighted, with extended coverage, in contrast to shorter notices, industry or exhibition news, or reader comments.

How do we understand a cultural artefact from the 1920s, 1930s and into the 1940s? We can't experience that artefact in the way movie-goers and readers of the 'Sun', 'Punch', the 'Herald' and 'Smith's Weekly' might have in those decades as film and the cinema were evolving in Australia. We can only read the archive of its traces. But it is an important and unique archive because it is about the first decades of the sound cinema and the new role of the film critic who was making sense of this first decade and anticipating its possibilities – being both provoked and disappointed. As a journalist and film writer Slessor was deeply immersed in, and affected by, the experience of film, and he relished the critical and educational function of the film reviewer in that era. In his encounter with the sound film Slessor was able to bring to bear his extensive knowledge of literature, theatre (classical and musical), and popular song, as film created and redefined its relation to adjacent cultural forms. Methods of research and selection are part of our understanding of cultural artefacts of the past. Slessor's writing about film for popular newspapers, as someone involved every day in the medium in multiple and layered ways, and with complex relations to the culture within which he worked, provides a unique chronicle of one of the prehistories of contemporary media culture.

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Transculturality and Filmic Practice

Cultural Difference and Transcultural Belonging in 'Babel'

The 2006 film 'Babel' is the third collaboration between two Mexicans – scriptwriter Guillermo Arriaga and director Alejandro González Iñárritu[1] – and a transnational co-production among companies based in France, Mexico, and the U.S. Not only has it received numerous awards, but it has also been paid considerable attention by reviewers and scholars. Particularly the latter have explored its representation of borders, immigration policies, space, time, and issues of translation, as well as its focus on children, affective dimensions, and contingency. The majority of reviews and research, however, can be divided into two, seemingly mutually exclusive, camps. One camp draws a direct connection between the film title's biblical implications (the Tower of Babel) and its message, and hence insists that the film represents linguistic confusion and human communicative failures. Critic David Denby, for instance, writes in the 'New Yorker': "The movie is a lofty globe-hopping lament over mishaps and misunderstandings in wildly dissimilar places [...] We are scattered into different languages and habits, and either we can't talk to one another at all or we fall into gruesome misunderstandings".[2] Michael W. DeLashmutt similarly emphasizes 'Babel's' depiction of global unity as an illusion and its insistence on cultural disparity and prejudice.[3] The other end of the argumentative spectrum is represented first and foremost by film scholar Werner Faulstich, who reads the film in opposition to its biblical title. "It is a film about entirely successful communication, not about failing communication, as many critics think".[4] To Faulstich, 'Babel' demonstrates that all continents, nations, and cultures are linked; that human beings as individuals and in their relationships are comparable to each other beyond all cultural barriers and circumstances; that the diversity of languages does not hamper communication; and that cultural differences are, in the final analysis, not decisive.[5]

Such contrasting readings of 'Babel', however, fail to address its complex representational strategies. For what makes this film so challenging is its representation of cultural differences and divisions *and* transcultural belonging and a common humanity; its simultaneous emphasis on the entanglements and commonalities of human beings across the globe, and on the geopolitical realities and cultural divides dominating their lives. Interpreting 'Babel' through the theoretical framework of transculturality allows me to shed light on its formal and

1 The first two films of what is considered a trilogy by many critics are 'Amores Perros' (2000) and '21 Grams' (2003).
2 David Denby: A Critic at Large: The New Disorder, p. 4.
3 Michael W. DeLashmutt: Breaking the Ties that Bind, p. 496. Similar attitudes are displayed by Rachael K. Bosley; Juan Pellicer; Dolores Tierney.
4 Werner Faulstich: Die Überwindung des strafenden Gottes, p. 192; my translation.
5 Werner Faulstich: Grundkurs Filmanalyse, p. 215.

thematic complexities and to situate it in the post-9/11 resurgence of conservative nationalism. 'Babel' can be called a transcultural film, as it accomplishes to engage critically with cultural difference, the nation-state and its borders, and the political and economic inequalities it produces, while simultaneously emphasizing transcultural belonging, human connectedness, and universal humanism across the globe.

Transculturality and the Resurgence of Conservative Nationalism

As defined by the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch in his essay "Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" (1999), transculturality seeks to transcend the traditional Herderian concept of culture as a stable, territory-based and autonomous realm.[6] In opposition to this idea of culture as internally homogeneous, separatist, and exclusive, transculturality emphasizes the permeations of cultural boundaries, the mutual cultural appropriations and interpenetrations, and therefore conceptualizes "culture" as inclusive.[7] Ways of life today do not end at the borders of national cultures any more but are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other in transnational dimensions. This is a consequence of the "inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures" due to processes of migration, a global economy producing economic (inter)dependencies, as well as material and immaterial communication systems.[8] Through acts of mutual appropriation and interpenetration, hybridization occurs, with much of the previously foreign entering the structures of the self and with characteristics of the self becoming foreign.[9] Transculturality does not imply the uniformization of single cultures into a larger global culture. Instead, it fosters a new diversity of different cultures and life-forms, with each emerging from transcultural permeations.[10]

As Günther H. Lenz has so succinctly put it, transculturality "critically engages the boundaries of the nation-state without simply dismissing it, distinguishing between the political and juridical workings of the nation-state and the dynamics of the culture(s) of/in a nation-state *that always transcends its borders*". Hence, it "works through [...] and works with cultural differences in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. without dissolving them or claiming a new synthesis".[11] The concept of transculturality, as Welsch insists, "is able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects", that is, it does not ignore what Welsch himself calls the "resurgence of particularisms worldwide".[12] He obviously refers to the strengthening of local ties, allegiances, and identity politics within different state formations in the wake of globalization processes, which

6 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today, pp. 194 ff.
7 Ibid., p. 197; see also Andreas Jahn-Sudmann: Film und Transnationalität, p. 17.
8 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality, pp. 197-198.
9 Ibid., p. 198; Werner Faulstich: Grundkurs Filmanalyse, p. 209.
10 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality, pp. 203; 205.
11 Günther H. Lenz: Towards a Politics of American Transcultural Studies, p. 396 (original emphasis).
12 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality, pp. 204; 205.

has led scholars to reflect on the complex relationship between the global and the local, the transnational and the national.[13] "The continued force of nationalism", Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden have argued, "[...] must be recognized as an emotionally charged component of the construction of the narratives of cultural identity that people at all levels of society use to maintain a stable sense of self".[14] "Nationalism", Craig Calhoun starts his seminal work on the topic, "is not a moral mistake".

> [While being] too often implicated in atrocities, and in more banal but still unjust prejudices and discriminatory practices, [...] it is also a form of social solidarity and one of the background conditions on which modern democracy has been based. It has helped secure domestic inclusion and redistributive policies [...] [and] helps locate an experience of belonging in a world of global flows and fears. Sometimes it underwrites struggle against the fantastically unequal and exploitative terms on which global integration is being achieved.[15]

Calhoun therefore concludes that we should "recognize the continued importance of national solidarities".[16] Nationalism received an additional boost in the wake of 9/11, which led to a downturn of the pro-globalist fever of the 1990s.[17] "While the attack on the twin towers and the Pentagon radically exposed the permeability of national borders that had been eroded by the forces of globalization, the [Bush] administration [...] [went] through great lengths to tighten and shore up those borders, legally, politically, and militarily".[18] In addition, by introducing the idea of a homeland, most visibly in the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003, political ideologues, backed up by conservative scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington, have suggested a sense of unity based on native origins, birthplace, birthright, common bloodlines, ancient ancestry, and racial/ethnic homogeneity. Such unity has "relied structurally on its intimate opposition to the notion of the foreign",[19] the creation of 'us' vs. 'them' binaries. Moreover, this understanding of unity feeds itself on radical insecurity, mostly embodied by supposed threats of terrorism. Not surprisingly, the homeland ideology has had an "exclusionary effect that underwrites a resurgent nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment and policy".[20] It is to be expected that the Covid-19 pandemic, with its border closures and restrictions, will, in the long run, have a similarly exclusive effect. Reinforcing a rising tide of nationalism and unleashing anti-immigrant rhetoric, the pandemic is likely to heighten nationalist affinities for a securely bordered homeland and to foster anti-immigration policies.

The ensuing analysis demonstrates that in 'Babel' cultural difference and transcultural belonging coexist not only on a thematic but also on a formal level. By confronting viewers with humans' communicative failures, mutual suspicions, 'us' vs. 'them' binaries, and geopolitical and cultural divides, 'Babel' negotiates

13 See, for example, Rob Wilson, Wimal Dissayanake: Global/Local.
14 Elizabeth Ezra, Terry Rowden: General Introduction, p. 4.
15 Craig Calhoun: Nations Matter, p. 1.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 13.
18 Amy Kaplan: Homeland Insecurities: Transformations of Language and Space, p. 59. See also Jamie Winders: Bringing Back the (B)order, pp. 922-929.
19 Amy Kaplan: Homeland Insecurities, p. 59.
20 Ibid., p. 61.

the post-9/11 paranoia that has led to a resurgence of conservative nationalism and a discourse of homeland security. Through its simultaneous emphasis on a common humanity and human interconnectedness across the globe as well as universal human values, the film challenges the aforementioned social and political discourses and their exclusionary nature, instead promoting the idea of the existence of transcultural webs that are woven from highly diverse cultures and life-forms and that transcend – but not dismiss – the idea of the nation-state.[21]

Cultural Differences, Homeland Insecurities, and Border Anxieties

'Babel' is a multi-narrative, non-linear drama which links stories taking place in Japan, Morocco, Mexico, and the United States. Two young Moroccan boys, Yussef and Ahmed, are given a gun by their father to protect their family's goats from jackals, with which they incidentally shoot Susan, an American tourist traveling with her estranged husband, Richard. Amidst sensationalized media allegations of a terrorist attack, young Ahmed is killed by Moroccan officials in a shootout. Simultaneously, Amelia, the nanny of Richard and Susan's two young children – Mike and Debbie – in San Diego, takes her charges to her son's wedding in Mexico, unbeknownst to the parents. Upon re-entering the U.S., Amelia's nephew, provoked by racist border police, leaves Amelia and the children stranded in the desert. Eventually they are found, only to have unsympathetic border officials deport Amelia back to Mexico. Meanwhile, in Japan, teenage Chieko tries to cope with her mother's suicide and with the loneliness and alienation of being deaf and non-verbal of hearing in an urban landscape.

'Babel' presents a divided world, attending to the political and economic disparities, inequalities, and injustices between developed and developing countries that cannot be mediated or alleviated through the media, internet, international tourism, and global trade. In particular, the film can be read as a comment, as Iñárritu himself phrased it, on "the paranoid state that now this regime of George Bush is having [...]", with its emphasis on the existence of separate cultures and the concept of the homeland.[22] In 'Babel', the "clash of civilizations", to use Huntington's infamous phrase, is presented both on cinematographic and thematic levels.[23]

Formally, each of the stories presented "takes place in a clearly demarcated cultural/national landscape distinguished through differences in visual composition and cinematography".[24] Thus, the Morocco sequences are shot on Super 16mm together with faster stock. Iñárritu uses these cinematic devices in order to make Morocco "[f]eel difficult, almost dirty, because of what transpires there".[25] The Tokyo and Mexico/USA sequences are filmed with anamorphic lenses and

21 Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona similarly interpret 'Babel' as a "tale about huge divisions and close connections among human beings across the globe" (Alejandro González Iñárritu, p. 53).
22 Quoted in Todd Gilchrist: Interview, n. pag.
23 Samuel P. Huntington: Clash of Civilizations, p. 22.
24 Nadine Chan Su-Lin: Cosmopolitan Cinema, p. 91.
25 Quoted in Dolores Tierney: Alejandro González Iñárritu, p. 112.

shot on 35mm.[26] In addition, each of the narratives is linked with a specific soundtrack, ranging from Japanese pop music, sounds of traditional Japanese string instruments to Middle Eastern and fast Mexican music.[27] These contrastive mise-en-scènes and cinematic techniques suggest a "vast and disjunct world", characterized by various separate national and cultural spaces.[28]

This sense of separation and isolation is also evoked on the level of theme. Throughout the film, communicative failures, fears of the Other, mutual suspicions, cultural prejudices, and homeland insecurities abound. Its characters speak in six languages: English, Spanish, Japanese, Arabic, Berber, and Sign language. Mike evidences his cultural indoctrination by immediately repeating his mother's view that "Mexico is really dangerous",[29] Santiago rails about "fucking gringo assholes",[30] and Richard complains to the Moroccan policeman and the tour guide about their "fucked-up country".[31] Susan is paranoid about hygiene issues in Morocco: she excessively cleans her hands, uses her own knife and fork to avoid contact with the Moroccan environment, and blames her husband for drinking a Coke with ice. Just as Coke, the prototypical U.S.-American product, must not mingle with Moroccan water, Susan walls herself up in cultural isolation, as Ana Mª Manzanas and Jesús Benito rightly argue.[32]

The sequence of the tourist bus entering the Moroccan village Tazarine in order to bring the heavily bleeding Susan to the tour guide's house serves as an example of such cultural anxieties and racial prejudices and a thinking in binary oppositions.[33] Viewers are presented a montage sequence of the village from the point of view of the tourists through the bus window. The tourists' faces, captured by a hand-held camera, display fear and skepticism of the exotic Moroccan Other outside and post-9/11 anxieties about a potential terrorist attack. Long-distance shots create a sense of distance and difference, framing the villagers in a completely alien and threatening landscape and culture. Mournful, hesitant sounds of a Middle-Eastern tune even increase the unease captured by the camera.[34] The tourists' fear of the Other is even heightened by the media, who immediately spread the U.S. government's interpretation of the boys' shooting as an act of terrorism.[35] 'Babel' provides viewers with information most of the film's characters do not have, indicating that the shooting was a boyhood prank or, rather, utter coincidence. The audience's discrepant awareness makes U.S.-American interpretations of events appear hysterical and highly exaggerated, and invites viewers to question the ongoing discourse on the War on Terror.

Suspicions of the foreign and unknown, however, are not limited to the members of the so-called First World. 'Babel's achievement is to switch between

26 Rachael K. Bosley: A Shot Fired in Africa Echoes around the World in Babel, n. pag.
27 Nadine Chan Su-Lin: Cosmopolitan Cinema, p. 91.
28 Rita Barnard: Fictions of the Global, p. 209.
29 Babel, TC: 00:28:17.
30 Ibid., TC: 01:25:41.
31 Ibid., TC: 01:29:09.
32 Ana Mª Manzanas, Jesús Benito: Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film, p. 135.
33 Babel, TC: 00:35:35-00:37:23.
34 Ibid., TC: 00:35:35-00:37:23.
35 Ibid., TC: 00:58:33.

points-of-view and to demonstrate that suspicions and fears are mutual. In the aforementioned bus sequence, the Moroccan villagers are presented as similarly skeptical of the tourist newcomers: they eye the bus and the blonde Susan suspiciously, and one woman even shuts her door to avoid contact. The shot-reverse-shot technique creates the sense of two disparate cultures, divided by religion, language, and socioeconomic, physical, and linguistic differences, unable to ever meet.[36]

Not only does 'Babel' shed light on the "borders which are inside ourselves", as Iñárritu has phrased it,[37] but it also tackles the external and physical borders. In particular, the film negotiates the post-9/11 "national imperatives of border control".[38] Especially states adjacent to the Mexican-U.S. border have become battlegrounds in the U.S.-American debate about immigration policy after 9/11. The terrorist attacks gave lawmakers and administration officials the opportunity to present undocumented migration as a major security threat, which has led to border anxieties at best and border hysteria at worst. The reform of immigration law, as well as the enforcement of the Southern border in particular, has been advertised as a defense mechanism against terrorist attacks.[39]

'Babel' is highly critical of the border hysteria that developed in the U.S. in the wake of 9/11 and that has since been exploited for various political purposes. It portrays the border hysteria as one-directional: while the borders of the developing world are presented as permeable (Amelia gets to Mexico easily and quickly; American/Japanese tourists can go on vacation in Morocco), Amelia and Santiago's crossing of the U.S.-American border from Mexico is fraught with difficulties, racial prejudice, and harassment. Already on their way to Mexico, they are confronted with the political boundary, the wall, which divides Tijuana from San Diego, and the human tragedies it causes. On top of the wall, viewers see a Mexican with a backpack waiting for a clandestine opportunity to cross. Another shot depicts a border patrol jeep positioned on the U.S. side of the wall, signifying the dangerous nature of this endeavor.[40] On their way back, Amelia and Santiago arouse the suspicion and hostility of the border officials as they transport two white American children. Since Amelia cannot provide the parents' letter of permission and since Santiago cannot hide his intoxication, tensions between the officials and the Mexicans rise and culminate in Santiago's trespassing of the border and his abandoning Amelia and the children in the desert.[41] Amelia's search for help culminates in her arrest and in the U.S. official's 'convincing' her to accept voluntary deportation.[42] Despite having lived and worked in the United States for sixteen years, her status as an illegal immigrant allows U.S. authorities to dispose of her, with the lawsuit being just a formality. Without being able to retrieve any of her possessions accumulated during her long life in the U.S., she

36 Ibid., TC: 00:35:35-00:37:23; see also Nadine Chan Su-Lin: Cosmopolitan Cinema, p. 92.
37 Babel, Press Kit, p. 7 (my translation).
38 Jamie Winders: Bringing Back the (B)order, p. 922.
39 Ibid., pp. 924 f.; Mathew Coleman: Immigration Geopolitics beyond the Mexico-US Border, p. 54.
40 Babel, TC: 00:27:35 ff.
41 Ibid., TC: 01:20.33-01:26:05.
42 Ibid., TC: 01:58:50.

is placed on the Mexican side of the border, a poor and broken women.[43] Richard and Susan, her employers who profited from her undocumented work, do not seem to be assigned any responsibility and do not feel any obligations to her. That Amelia's story is only one of many is suggested by the shot through the barred windows of an SUV in the desert full of arrested young illegal immigrants who were caught during their dangerous journey across the border.[44]

Besides challenging neoconservative demands for securely bordered nations, 'Babel' presents the ideologically exalted 'us' as a very fragile category. Communicative failures, the film alleges, are not only a consequence of cultural and economic tensions and disparities between so-called First and Third World nations, but also emerge within seemingly homogeneous cultures hailed by neoconservatives as separate homelands or civilizations. This is, for instance, suggested by the utter emotional disjuncture between Richard and Susan at the beginning of the film or by the quarrels between Richard and the other tourists, who insist on leaving Richard and Susan behind for fear of falling victim to a(nother) terrorist attack.[45] The lack of intracultural understanding is also the main theme of the Japanese narrative strand. It seems at first sight rather detached from the rest of the film if one excepts the transfer of a hunting rifle from a Japanese tourist to a Moroccan hunter – clearly an allusion to the difference between hunting for leisure and hunting as an economic necessity. Repeated TV broadcasts in Japan inform Japanese audiences about the "terrorist attack in Morocco" and its happy ending and create linkages between the various storylines. While one could read these media broadcasts as an indicator of the heightened cohesion of a global world, 'Babel' does not allow for such a reading. Neither the Japanese detective nor Chieko, who both watch the news coverage, take great notice of the events broadcast all over the globe.[46] Rather than unifying people across the globe, the media is presented as fostering the imbalance of power between what is perceived as First and Third World nations. Through the spread of biased and inaccurate information, the media increases rather than alleviates cultural misunderstandings and prejudice and thus contributes to the post-9/11 culture of fear.[47]

Only tangentially linked to the other narrative strands, the Japanese plotline devotes itself to exploring one of the multiple rifts within post-industrial and hypermodern societies that cannot be alleviated through language, material affluence, postmodern mobility, or information technologies. Chieko belongs to a minority group within Japanese society – the deaf and non-verbal – and is therefore unable to meaningfully interact with all those around her not proficient in Sign language. But the lack of a 'lingua franca' is not the major reason for Chieko's failure to communicate her loneliness and psychic disorientation caused by teenage angst and the tragic loss of her mother. Her father, for instance, fluent in Sign language and able to linguistically understand his daughter, cannot reach

43 Ibid., TC: 01:59:15.
44 Ibid., TC: 01:50:42.
45 Ibid., TC: 00:38:28.
46 Ibid., TC: 00:45:42; 02:10:15.
47 See the sequences of Susan and Richard being welcomed in Casablanca by the U.S. ambassador and a host of reporters, which indicates that the global media has spread the news of the gunshot incident, distorting the actual truth of the event (Ibid., TC: 02:03:00 ff.).

her emotionally and fails to connect with her. Contrary to the biblical story its title alludes to, 'Babel' emphasizes, through Chieko's story in particular, that a 'lingua franca' does not guarantee successful communication. Chieko's "alienation", Su-Lin argues, "critiques the medium of language itself, demanding an interaction between people at the most pure level of feeling".[48] Selfishness, lack of empathy, and failed communication make the existence of a unified 'us' appear as a myth, lead to intracultural misunderstandings, and thus deprive homeland rhetoric of its foundation. 'Babel' seems to suggest that "bonds that exist between subjects exist not on the basis of their common ground – the same language, the same experience, and so on – but instead have a contingent origin".[49]

Common Humanity and Human Interconnectedness

Instead of limiting itself to such a bleak description of communicative failures, fragile national cultures, and prejudiced visions of the world, 'Babel' opens up a simultaneous panorama of a common humanity and human interconnectedness. Human beings today, the film suggests, are entangled with each other, partly due to processes of migration and communication systems, but mostly because of the universality of human experience. Once again, 'Babel' uses formal and thematic devices to emphasize common humanity and human interconnectedness.

The production mode of 'Babel' has determined its form. As collaboration between Mexicans, Americans, French, Moroccans, and Japanese, it was predestined to turn into "an international network narrative".[50] Such network narratives can be dated back to the 1920s and 1930s but became a staple of mainstream cinema (both commercial and art house) in the mid-1990s and have proliferated since then.[51] Network narratives are characterized by multiple protagonists, who are given more or less the same weight, numerous points-of-view and spaces, and several non-linear narratives that finally reveal a larger pattern underlying their individual trajectories. Often, a contingent moment, such as the Winchester gun in 'Babel', serves to link the seemingly disconnected narratives, setting off chains of cause and effect (the so-called butterfly-effect, as Edward Lorenz has termed it, suggesting that a beat of a butterfly's wings can cause a tornado on the other side of the world).[52] Network narratives tend to complicate notions of linear time by using "temporal dislocations" that compromise the traditional forward-moving plot.[53]

48 Nadine Chan Su-Lin: Cosmopolitan Cinema, pp. 96 f.
49 Todd McGowan: The Contingency of Connection, p. 413.
50 Paul Kerr: Babel's Network Narrative, pp. 41-44.
51 Ibid., p. 40. For an intensive reflection on the media industrial as well as cultural/global reasons for the rise of the network narrative, see David Bordwell: Poetics of Cinema, pp. 197 ff.; Paul Kerr: Babel's Network Narrative, pp. 45 ff.
52 David Bordwell: Lessons from Babel, n. pag.; see ibid.: Poetics of Cinema, pp. 191 f.; 199; Paul Kerr: Babel's Network Narrative, pp. 39 f.; Rita Barnard: Fictions of the Global, p. 208; Vivien Silvey: Not Just Ensemble Films, n. pag.; Patricia Pisters: The Mosaic Film – An Affaire of Everyone, n. pag.
53 Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona: Alejandro González Iñárritu, pp. 27, 49 f.

A classical network narrative, 'Babel's four seemingly separate storylines soon reveal similarities of form and theme. Formally, close inspection evidences a hidden organization of the different narratives, which are connected to each other in ever constant rhythms and symmetrical patterns. Juan Pellicer goes so far as to suggest that 'Babel' has a stanzaic form. The storylines are interlocked in parallel montages, and cinematic coherence is created between them. Causal connections are thereby transformed into interdependencies, so that a complex network emerges.[54] This careful arrangement of narrative strands prevents viewers from overly immersing themselves into the individual micronarratives and directs their attention to the larger macronarrative.[55]

Formal links between the various narratives are established through color, sound bridges, and graphic matches. Thus, the three settings, Morocco, Mexico, and Japan, are visually linked by carrying the color red through all of them: umber in Morocco, primary red in Mexico, and pink/magenta in Japan. Moreover, the grain, which is the filmic texture of Morocco, is carried through Mexico and Japan to varying degrees.[56] Especially in the last third of the film, Iñárritu connects the separate narratives through a lingering soundtrack. Graphic matches similarly connect the different narratives and link the various characters despite their radically different economic and political circumstances. Thus, after seeing Amelia's nephew killing a hen, the next sequence confronts us with Susan lying on the floor of the bus bleeding.[57]

On the level of theme, contingency becomes the major link between the film's seemingly disparate worlds.[58] The contingent event of the shooting forges connections around the globe. It directly triggers the story of Susan and Richard, which, in turn, causes Amelia's decision to take the children to the wedding and thus precipitates her final deportation. While Chieko's story appears independent first, toward the end of the film, we hear that it was the hunting rifle of Chieko's father that had triggered all the aforementioned events. Besides contingency, 'Babel' suggests, shared human pain and emotions also create connections in the global community. The conversation between Richard and the tour guide[59] serves as an example of the multiple sequences emphasizing transcultural connections between human beings.[60] Their sorrow about Susan's ever worsening condition, as well as their strong emotional attachment to their children, unite Richard and the tour guide across socioeconomic and cultural differences. Sitting across from each other as equals and successfully communicating about their families makes them realize their commonalities and de-emphasizes their cultural differences.

54 Juan Pellicer: Bridging Worlds: Transtextuality, Montage, and the Poetics of Babel, pp. 243 f.; see Werner Faulstich: Die Überwindung des strafenden Gottes, p. 189.
55 See Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona: Alejandro González Iñárritu, p. 59.
56 Rachael K. Bosley: A Shot Fired in Africa Echoes around the World in Babel, n. pag.
57 Babel, TC: 00:33:15.
58 See Todd McGowan: The Contingency of Connection, p. 408.
59 Babel, TC: 01:27:52-01:28:36.
60 For other examples, see Mike and Debbie's happy participation in the festive joy of the wedding together with the Mexican children as opposed to their initial skepticism of their Mexican surroundings (Babel, TC: 00:31:50; 00:57:04 ff.). Also, in her moment of greatest physical agony, Susan finally overcomes her tremendous fear of the cultural Other and accepts help by the tour guide's mother (Ibid., TC: 00:59:53).

The film's final scenes[61] constitute the climax of the themes of human interconnectedness and a common humanity, and tie together the separate narrative strands more closely, first and foremost through extradiegetic music – a hesitant, mournful guitar,[62] spheric music,[63] a trilling, nervous guitar,[64] melancholic sounds of a piano, and string instruments.[65] Most of the time, this extradiegetic musical score mutes the dialogues in the scenes, and viewers only occasionally hear other diegetic sounds, such as the rotor blades of the helicopter. "Words, the film seems to argue, cannot come close to the power of deeply felt human contact [...]".[66] In order to highlight the characters' emotions, viewers' attention is directed at their faces through numerous close-ups and a blurring of the background.[67] This cinematic linkage between the narrative strands is further intensified by a thematic focus on physical embrace and touch. Richard and Susan desperately kiss and caress each other, their physical touch finally enabling them to verbally express their feelings for each other.[68] Even though the detective refuses to sexually engage with Chieko, he lets her hold his hand and gently strokes her face, alleviating her loneliness and despair.[69] Sitting with torn clothes and without any possessions on the curb in Tijuana, Amelia is tightly embraced by her son.[70] Ahmed and Yussef emotionally interact with each other in Yussef's flashback of them catching the wind.[71] And Chieko and her father finally reach an understanding with her grasping his hand and drawing him into a tight embrace on the balcony of their apartment.[72] The tight physical embrace evoked by experiences of despair, pain, and loss, allows for a greater understanding than words could ever achieve and links the film's characters and its four narrative strands. While each embrace/touch links people from ethnically homogeneous cultures, the visual similarity and parallel editing suggests a global dimension: All human beings share emotional pain and long for greater understanding and intimacy.

As the camera zooms out and Chieko and her father disappear into the lights of Tokyo's vast cityscape, the viewer is left with the feeling that Chieko's is merely one of millions of similar stories shared by human beings all over the globe. "It's like pulling back from the beehive to see that we've just seen is only one of the myriad stories taking place in the city", Iñárritu argues. "I told you just one, but there are millions like this".[73] While such an insight might evoke feelings of insignificance and separation, shattering the hopes "for a deep and all-encompassing connectedness", as some scholars argue.[74] Others, including myself, read this

61 Babel, TC: 2:07:07-2:12:21.
62 Ibid., TC: 1:49:50; 1:59:06; 2:07:05.
63 Ibid., TC: 1:54:44.
64 Ibid., TC: 2:00:00.
65 Ibid., TC: 2:09:07.
66 Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona: Alejandro González Iñárritu, p. 62.
67 For example, TC: 01:50:46.
68 Babel, TC: 01:51:19.
69 Ibid., TC: 01:55:28.
70 Ibid., TC: 01:59:19.
71 Ibid., TC: 01:59:59.
72 Ibid., TC: 02:12:00.
73 Quoted in Celestino Deleyto, María del Mar Azcona: Alejandro González Iñárritu, p. 135.
74 Nadine Chan Su-Lin: Cosmopolitan Cinema, p. 98; see Sebastian Thies: Crystal Frontiers, p. 225.

"transition from the intimate to the sublime" as an invitation of viewers to contemplate life's complexities, the interconnection of an endless number of stories shared by human beings all over the world. "Up close, everyone's circumstances are different, but in the camera's sublime opening out it is inferred that everyone shares the same fundamental need for acceptance".[75] Cultural differences are eventually transcended in search for an underlying universal humanity

The final shot of Chieko and her father has the film end on a strong note of human interconnection. Its eventual overemphasis of transcultural belonging at the expense of its negotiation of cultural difference is also mirrored in its cinematographic language. Cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto emphasizes how this final shot "dramatically departed" from how the rest of 'Babel' was shot.[76] The viewer is left with a romantic and somewhat reductive message, which the DVD cover summarizes as follows: "Pain is universal – but so is hope". In its last seconds, 'Babel' sacrifices argumentative complexity in favor of a romantic and utopian ending.

Considered in its entirety, however, 'Babel' carefully negotiates the complex entanglements of cultural disparities and neoconservative binary thinking and increasing human interconnection and a common humanity. This dual strategy becomes most obvious where these two seemingly contradictory modes occur simultaneously. The sequence of Yussef and Ahmed fleeing after the bullet hits the tourist bus in Morocco is linked through a graphic match to the scene in which young Mike runs across the kitchen in suburban America, also wearing a red shirt. On the one hand, this visual continuity – which almost feels like a match-on-action cut – stresses the connectedness of human beings and the similarity of their existences. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of these sequences makes us painfully aware of the severe economic and geopolitical disparities that separate the American and the Moroccan children. Instead of going to school like Mike, Yussef and Ahmed are responsible for herding the goats and protecting them from jackals in the barren, hostile landscape surrounding the Berber village Taguenzalt. Their clothes display their poverty, and their family's hut is simple, crowded, and does not offer family members any privacy. Debbie and Mike, by contrast, grow up in a safe and orderly middle-class home equipped with all the modern household appliances, new furniture, and technological devices. Each has their own bed in a nicely furnished bedroom overflowing with toys. The swimming pool in front of the house greatly contrasts with the puddle of water in which the women in Taguenzalt wash their family's clothes.[77] The glaring differences between growing up in the so-called First and Third Worlds also become evident on a political level: the Moroccan police do not hesitate to immediately shoot Ahmed and to arrest Yussef to counter U.S.-American allegations of terrorism and lack of Moroccan efficiency. The boys' lives are dispensable in the unequal political game between different worlds. Mike and Debbie, by contrast, fare much better due to their status as First World citizens.

75 Vivien Silvey: Not Just Ensemble Films, n. pag.
76 Rachael K. Bosley: A Shot Fired in Africa Echoes around the World in Babel, n. pag.
77 Babel, TC: 00:08:17-00:10:25.

The border patrol officers do everything in their power to save the children lost in the desert.[78]

It is the formal and thematic engagement of 'Babel' with the tensions between cultural disparities and increasing cultural convergence that constitute its transcultural film aesthetics and that make it so relevant to viewers and those interested in the themes, aesthetics, genres, and production modes of contemporary film. The advantage of the concept of transculturality, as Welsch has claimed, is that it goes beyond the seemingly hard alternatives of globalization and particularization. "The globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled *'within'* transculturality".[79] As a transcultural film, 'Babel' functions at the interstices between the local and the global. As a transcultural film produced by someone from a developing country, it also directs its viewers' attention to the multiple disparities and injustices between developed and developing nations and problematizes post-9/11 ideas of cultural purity, cultural separatism, and homeland security. It seeks to "readjust[] our inner compass: away from the concentration on the polarity of the own and the foreign to an attentiveness for what might be common and connective wherever we encounter things foreign".[80]

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78 A similar discrepancy between so-called First- and Third-World residents is created through paralleling Susan's and Amelia's fates. While Susan's story is broadcast all over the world and her rescue is frantically celebrated, Amelia's deportation remains unheard.

79 Wolfgang Welsch: Transculturality, p. 204 (original emphasis).

80 Ibid., p. 201.

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The Ninth Prison

Desert Islands and no Witch in Margaret Atwood's 'Hag-Seed'

From Before or for After Humankind

"Islands", Gilles Deleuze says, "are either from before or for after humankind". This is because, he says, islands – and particularly desert islands – have a way of un-grounding our very thinking and being, our way of taking our own existence for granted: "That an island is deserted must appear *philosophically* normal to us" because "[h]umans cannot live, nor live in security, unless they assume that the active struggle between earth and water is over, or at least contained. [...] They must somehow persuade themselves that a struggle of this kind does not exist, or that it has somehow ended". Even the mundane fact that "England is populated will always come as a surprise", for "humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents". Yet at the same time, the "very existence of islands" blocks this necessary oblivion; is "the negation of this point of view, of this effort, this conviction".[1]

Islands, therefore, though part of the world that humans live in, either precede or follow upon them. We have not developed forms of inhabitation that would allow us to remember islands as islands *and* to live there, at the same time; there is a conceptual incompatibility. Habitually, at least, we cease regarding islands as islands as soon as we populate them. However, a troubling, unresolved quality remains that likewise makes (desert) islands into launch pads for utopian political thought; into occasions to envision what amounts, in Deleuze's description, into a properly poetic way of inhabiting the world:

> In certain conditions which attach them to the very movement of things, humans do not put an end to desertedness, they make it sacred. Those people who come to the island indeed occupy and populate it; but in reality, were they sufficiently separate, sufficiently creative, they would give the island only a dynamic image of itself [so that] geography and the imagination would be one. To that question so dear to the old explorers – "which creatures live on deserted islands?" – one could only answer: human beings live there already, but uncommon humans, they are absolutely separate, absolute creators [...], an Idea of humanity, a prototype, a man who would almost be a god, a woman who would be a goddess, a great Amnesiac, a pure Artist, a consciousness of Earth and Ocean, an enormous hurricane, a beautiful witch, a statue from the Easter Islands[,][2]

in short, "a human being who precedes itself", who does not rely on the fixity of its own form as the horizon of its being, who cares not that much about things

1 Gilles Deleuze: Desert Islands and Other Texts, p. 9 (original emphasis).
2 Ibid., pp. 10 f.

remaining as they *are*, and is quite willing to attune itself to what they *become*.[3] Such a being would be unburdened by the imperative to appropriate (islands, or anything else).

In Willam Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', arguably, such a form of living is precisely not found. The island in the play manifests, mostly, in its relation to the political hierarchies of the mainland: serving as a kind of one-woman penal colony to which the Algerian witch Sycorax is exiled in punishment for "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible",[4] it becomes a bone of contention between her son, Caliban, who lays a formal claim to it ("this island's mine by Sycorax my mother", he says),[5] and the exile succeeding Sycorax – the magician Prospero, usurped Duke of Milan, who exerts factual power over "this bare island" and its inhabitants.[6] Whether Sycorax ever understood herself as the island's owner in any formal sense, we do not know. She is an ominous figure whose omission from the plot has been much remarked upon in criticism: the "blue-eyed hag", "hither brought with child"[7] has no immediate place in the events that 'The Tempest' stages, and rarely receives one in reworkings of Shakespeare's material. As Irene Lara puts it quite succinctly, "it is as if her story of banishment in the text sets Sycorax on a path to future discursive banishment, marking the continuity of dominant cultures' refusal or inability to see and listen to Sycorax, a symbol of 'the' dark female, the banished woman, and the feared racialized and sexualized witch/healer".[8] Her absence, however, is an oscillating rather than a definitive one: "although she is dead and thus physically absent in the play, she is firmly present in the memories of Caliban and Prospero who repeatedly invoke her to forward their practical and ideological aims. Therefore [...] Sycorax's absent *presence* impacts Shakespeare's narrative, as well as has a signifying life beyond Shakespeare".[9] It is through the ambivalence of this absence-presence that she constitutes "a racialized *hagging* memory, haunting some of her fellow characters as well as many of 'The Tempest' readers with partially detailed, partially left to the imagination stories about her magical and 'earthy' powers and 'terrible' behaviors".[10] Therefore, Lara says, we can invoke Sycorax as "a metaphor of the actual racialized, sexualized women of color witch/healers largely made *absent* in discourse".[11]

3 Ibid.
4 William Shakespeare: The Tempest, 1.2.264.
5 Ibid., 1.2.332.
6 Ibid., Epilogue 8.
7 Ibid., 1.2.269.
8 Irene Lara: Beyond Caliban's Curses, p. 81.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 83.
11 Ibid., p. 81. As what kind of comment on colonialism we should understand the play in general is, of course, a matter of contention in criticism. It is, however, often pointed out that the mechanisms of colonial exploitation are made quite explicit in the play, for instance when Trinculo laconically points out that in England, "when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian" (Tempest, 2.2.31-2; see also Rachel Bryant: Towards the Desertion of Sycorax's Island). On power dynamics and the political in 'The Tempest', see further John Kunat ('Play me false': Rape, Race, and Conquest in 'The Tempest'). Kunat is insightful, too, when it comes to the matter of Caliban's attempted rape of Prospero's daughter Miranda, and the ambiguity of rape in the Early Modern period between being an assault on personal vs. on patriarchal rights. All in all, 'The Tempest'

The novel 'Hag-Seed' is Margaret Atwood's 2016 adaptation of 'The Tempest'. It follows – somewhat surprisingly, given Atwood's reputation as a feminist writer – the tradition of omitting Sycorax, and does so even more thoroughly than Shakespeare because along with her person, the (witch-)craft she stands for is likewise banned from events. It is through contrasting these different nuances of exclusion that the potential of the figure of Sycorax becomes visible. For in Shakespeare, even though Sycorax receives no stage time, the magic she stands for persists in subtle ways; and thus, precisely in her uncanny status as repressed but not *entirely* invisible can she serve "the negation of this point of view, of this effort, this conviction" that the "struggle between earth and water" is ended, that history is fixed in its tracks, that we have figured out the world for good.[12] Her omission proper, such as it is achieved in Atwood's novel, tames Shakespeare's play and makes it into a properly appropriative text – which, in turn, only serves to highlight the relevance she and everything connected to her, including her son, and even contingency itself, have for 'The Tempest' despite her own conspicuous absence from the stage.

The Hags of History

Sycorax's (hi)story – or rather, the lack thereof – brings us to the issue of the actual processes of exclusion and their logic by which the hags of both the Old World and the New ended up placed firmly on the margins from which they haunt our centres so persistently with their 'spells'. That women's history and the history of appropriation (colonial and otherwise) are intricately entwined has been detailed by Silvia Federici in the book she has titled, after Shakespeare's 'Tempest', 'Caliban and the Witch'. Federici argues that in the process of primitive accumulation – by which she means the Early Modern transition period from feudalist to capitalist structures – the oppression of women, the exploitations of early colonialism, and class struggle all fuelled each other on in specific ways, resulting not only in the loss of the commons but equally in the strict gendered segregation of productive and reproductive spheres, with the latter ending up privatised in all the senses of the world: removed from the official world, deprived of visibility, acknowledgment, and relevance. Hunting (and burning) women as witches, Federici argues, is – alongside such measures as land enclosures or the so-called 'bloody laws' which instigated draconian punishment for petty crimes committed, more often than not, by poor people out of dire necessity – an important ingredient in this mixture of oppressive strategies. What on the surface might appear as an act of pure superstition or religious tyranny worked in effect – whether consciously intended that way or not – towards the appropriation of the female body for the production of the labour force more than anything else.

This hinges quite crucially, Federici argues, on the fact that the privatisation of land produced, not necessarily poverty as unprecedented circumstance, but new

might just be another fine instance of what Stephen Greenblatt calls Shakespeare's "theatrical opportunism" (Shakespeare Bewitched, p. 29).

12 Gilles Deleuze: Desert Islands, p. 9.

forms of poverty, and that poverty in turn became criminalised and, to a considerable degree, feminised; with waged work being less of an option for women. "The social function of the commons was especially important for women, who, having less title to land and less social power, were more dependent on them for their subsistence, autonomy, and sociality", Federici explains. "Not only did cooperation in agricultural labour die when land was privatized and individual labor contracts replaced collective ones; economic differences among the rural population deepened, as the number of poor squatters increased who had nothing left but a cot and a cow, and no choice but to go [...] beg for a job".[13] Women, more vulnerable on the road and barred from many occupations such as soldiery, could not 'try their luck elsewhere' quite so easily – nor could the elderly; leaving, at the bottom of the food chain, precisely the old women who, "no longer supported by their children, fell onto the poor rolls or survived by borrowing, petty theft, and delayed payments".[14] "Witchcraft", Federici argues, was in fact often simply the label that the criminalisation of poverty was conducted under in such cases where the charges were levelled against women, for the outcome of these processes of primitive accumulation was a "peasantry polarized by [...] a web of hatred and resentments that is well-documented in the records of the witch-hunt, which show that quarrels relating to requests for help, the trespassing of animals, or unpaid rents were in the background of many accusations".[15]

This background is relevant because the figure of the hag such as we find it, not least, in Shakespeare, can easily be mapped onto it – think only of the (in)famous presentation of the witches in 'Macbeth', for instance when at the beginning of the play, the first witch reports her recent pastimes to her sisters as: "A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap | And munched, and munched, and munched. | 'Give me,' quoth I. | 'Aroynt thee, witch,' the rump-fed ronyon cries".[16] The Algerian witch Sycorax from 'The Tempest' remains, of course, a much more elusive figure than the witches in 'Macbeth' – and even those are, in some ways, elusive enough – but the little we learn about her makes her appear the prototypical 'hag' indeed. She is introduced to us as the "foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy | Was grown into a hoop",[17] a "damned witch" whose "mischiefs manifold" are "terrible | To enter human hearing".[18] Prospero's derogatory descriptions evoke an abject combination of age, animality, and sexuality that quite corresponds to the image of the "lecherous old woman"[19] into which the idea of 'witch' was often translated in Early Modern Europe: her commands are "earthy" and despite her advanced years, she "litter[s]" a son on the island, "got by the devil himself".[20]

Claire Waters in fact argues that we should read the famously inscrutable description "blue-eyed hag"[21] as 'blew-eyed' or 'blear-eyed,' which in turn would

13 Silvia Federici: Caliban and the Witch, pp. 71 f.
14 Ibid., p. 72.
15 Ibid.
16 Willam Shakespeare: Tempest, 1.3.4-6.
17 Ibid., 1.2.258-9.
18 Ibid., 1.2.263-5.
19 Silvia Federici: Caliban, p. 180.
20 Willam Shakespeare: Tempest, 1.2.320.
21 Ibid., 1.2.269.

suggest an infection of the eye common in the elderly, and give us, beneath the apparent gruesomeness of the witch, the image of a rather frail old woman in a bad state of health.[22]

Federici unfolds a detailed account of the political, economical, and legal changes of the period (the Black Death, the price revolution, legislation regarding prostitution, land enclosures, the persecution of vagabonds and heretics, population growth and decline). It should have raised some suspicions, she argues, that "the witch-hunt occurred simultaneously with the colonization and extermination of the populations of the New World, the English enclosures, the beginning of the slave trade, the enactment of 'bloody laws' against vagabonds and beggars", and that it "climaxed in that interregnum between the end of feudalism and the capitalist 'take off' when the peasantry in Europe reached the peak of its power but, in time, also consummated its historic defeat". And yet, "the witch-hunt rarely appears in the history of the proletariat"; and where it is framed in the terms of a 'panic' or a 'craze,' it is removed from the context of economic-political interest and medicalised, with the side effect of "exculpat[ing] the witch hunters and depoliticiz[ing] their crimes".[23]

Is Federici guilty of indirectly idealising the pre-modern societal status of women? Not necessarily: "the fact that unequal power relations existed prior to the advent of capitalism, as did a discriminating sexual division of labour does not detract from [the] assessment", she says, that women experienced a specific form of disenfranchisement during the late medieval and Early Modern period, where not only did women lose access to any kind of common source of subsistence (as did everyone), but where "women themselves became the commons" and their labour thus appeared "as natural resource". The bourgeois family acted as one important factor that helped the "concealment" of female everyday activity so that it did (and does) not officially figure as 'labour,' "defining women in terms – mothers, wives, daughters, widows – that hid their status as workers".[24] The situation in the colonies – here, Federici looks specifically at the Spanish-American

22 Compare also Reginald Scot's remark, quoted by Waters: "The most of such as are said to be witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, blear-eyed, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles" (The Tempest's Sycorax as 'blew eye'd hag', p. 604).

23 Silvia Federici: Caliban, pp. 163 ff. Marx's analyses of political economy, Federici argues, are no exception: examining "primitive accumulation from the viewpoint of the waged male proletariat and the development of commodity production"; Marx neglects "the changes it introduced in the social position of women and the production of labor-power" and thus misses "(i) the development of a new sexual division of labor subjugating women's labor and women's reproductive function to the reproduction of the work-force; (ii) the construction of a new patriarchal order, based upon the exclusion of women from waged-work" and "(iii) the mechanization of the proletarian body and its transformation, in the case of women, into a machine for the production of new workers" (Caliban, p. 12).

24 Ibid., p. 97. John Kunat in fact reads the relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand in 'The Tempest' against the very backdrop of the constitution of a private, depoliticised sphere of care. He derives this reading, not from the history of capitalism, but from a revival of Aristotelian political ideas during the Renaissance, which implied the postulation of a 'natural' sphere both absolutely distinct and absolutely necessary for the political sphere. "In the social sphere Miranda will be given precedence; it is her domain and its tasks are vital to the proper functioning of the political. Nonetheless, these tasks require that the social be *different* absolutely from the political, even though the two are represented as mutually constitutive. The social is like the powerful queen on the chessboard, carefully protecting the impotent king, although it is only the king who matters". The "other 'natural' upon the island" is, of course, Caliban ('Play me false', pp. 320 f.).

colonies – shares parallels with and cross-fertilises processes of appropriation in Europe. "The assumption is the continuity between the subjugation of the populations of the New World and that of people in Europe, women in particular, in the transition to capitalism. In both cases we have the forcible removal of entire communities from their land, large-scale impoverishment", and find that "forms of repression that had been developed in the Old World were transported to the New and then re-imported into Europe".[25]

Federici's analysis thus describes a constellation entirely mirrored in 'The Tempest', with land appropriated by people newly arrived to it, male Indigenous work force exploited, and the 'witch' conspicuously dismissed from the picture. To put the plot in the vocabulary of primitive accumulation suggested by Federici: in the situation such as we encounter it in the play, the hag (Sycorax) has recently vanished from the land she was living off and been substituted by a colonial master (Prospero), who appropriates this land and sets the male inhabitants (Caliban and also, if one takes the liberty to gender him such, Ariel) to work not for their own, but for his subsistence (hauling wood) and profit (gaining revenge). In this sense, Shakespeare's 'Tempest' presents a constellation emblematic – at least from a contemporary viewpoint – of the dynamics of what Federici calls (both with and in critique of Marx) "primitive accumulation". Land as well as work force are appropriated as resources, with some exertions becoming visible as labour – however poorly recompensated – whereas others are relegated to invisibility, thus constituting a reproductive sphere sharply delineated from the productive sphere and privatised: removed from the public eye, Sycorax' (witch-)craft and (child-bearing) labours are reported, not presented.[26]

The Sorcerers of Today

What happens when this material is picked up by a contemporary feminist author well-known for works such as 'The Handmaid's Tale' or 'Alias Grace'? In some ways, curiously little. Alongside other novelists such as Jeanette Winterson or Anne Tyler, Margaret Atwood was commissioned by the Hogarth Press (recently revived and now an imprint of Chatto & Windus) to contribute to a series of novelistic adaptations of Shakespeare. Atwood's 2016 novel transports the plot, appropriately enough, from an island of exile to a modern-day prison (Fletcher Correctional), where Felix Phillips, a once-successful theatre director, stages

25 Silvia Federici: Caliban, p. 219.

26 Curiously enough, though, it is Shakespeare's Caliban who becomes a symbol of anti-colonial rebellion, not Sycorax – even though, Federici says, it was often women who organized resistance against colonisation: "It is ironic, then, in view of this record, that Caliban and not his mother Sycorax, the witch, should be taken by Latin American revolutionaries as a symbol of the resistance to colonization. For Caliban could only fight his master by cursing him in the language he had learned from him, thus being dependent in his rebellion on his 'master's tools.' He could also be deceived into believing that his liberation could come through a rape and through the initiative of some opportunistic white proletarians transplanted in the New World whom he worshipped as gods. Sycorax, instead, [...] might have taught her son to appreciate the local powers [...] and those communal ties that, over centuries of suffering, have continued to nourish the liberation struggle to this day, and that already haunted, as a promise, Caliban's imagination" (Caliban, p. 229).

Shakespeare's 'Tempest' as part of the educational "Literacy through Literature" programme he has been hired to run. The staging fulfils a double function: Felix, former artistic director of a prestigious theatre festival (Makeshiweg Festival) and now dethroned by his scheming assistant Tony, uses the opportunity to take revenge both on this assistant and on another old enemy of his, Sal O'Nally, who are now ministers of heritage and of justice, respectively, and hence scheduled to visit the prison for the staging of the 'Tempest'. Through elaborate special effects which involve, among other things, a secret double run of the play – most of the prison's inhabitants, inmates and wardens alike, watch a screened version while unbeknownst to them, Tony, Sal, and their associates are kidnapped in an actual secret live run of the play – Felix brings to fruition a plan he has been hatching for twelve years.

The reader witnesses the Fletcher Correctional Players, under Felix' guidance – or should we say, Felix' government? –, stage 'The Tempest' as a reflection on confinement and release. Felix structures the play into, all in all, nine prisons, with the nature of the ninth prison remaining a mystery until the end of the play, when it is revealed to be the play itself from which the protagonists must be set free. Felix's other "unique incarceration events"[27] are: Sycorax' confinement on the island; Ariel's in a pine tree; Prospero's and Miranda's in a leaky boat; Prospero and Miranda on the island; Caliban in a hole in the rocks; Ferdinand enchanted and chained; Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian stranded on the island, enchanted and driven to madness; and Stephano and Trinculo confined to a muddy pond.[28] Additionally, Felix himself is, in a sense, confined to his own personal prison of grief: having lost his three-year old daughter to meningitis, he re-conjures her into his life as his imagined, but constant companion, adjusting her age as time moves on. However, this is really the only sense in which there is a kind of 'communitas' between him and his troupe; in other regards, he is the perfect impersonation of Prospero and hence quite firmly anchored in his role as the architect of events rather than a participant in them. This, in turn, indirectly confirms the dichotomy of confinement and freedom that Felix points out to his class: the class are made to reflect on incarceration – but ultimately, this reflection itself is more a means to an end to achieve Felix' long-developed scheme than it is a genuine chance for education and emancipation.

It is, in that sense, not for nothing that Felix assumes the last name "Duke" when he applies for the position at Fletcher Correctional. He has kept a staff and a cloak made for the 'Tempest' that he meant to stage for the Makeshiweg Festival. There and in his prison version, the role he casts himself for is, of course, that of Prospero. His early-deceased daughter is called Miranda; and in a sense, he even adopts a second Miranda during the course of the book: the actress Anne-Marie Greenland who he had cast for his Makeshiweg Festival when she was a teenager, and who he tracks down and re-hires as a grown-up woman. There is a fleeting sense that his mastery is not quite as complete as it seems: the novel begins with Felix putting on false teeth which do not fit properly. His

27 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 126.
28 See ibid., p. 125.

idealisation of his daughter is somewhat excessive and a generous dose of patriarchal pride is mixed into his affection: he has been "entranced with her from the start", we learn. "Once she could talk he'd even taken her to the theatre; so bright she'd been. She'd sit there, taking it all in, not wriggling or bored as a lesser two-year-old would have been".[29] (And conveniently, the imaginary Miranda turns out to be, at 15, a rather dutiful housewife: she "doesn't like it when he's away so much, during the months when he's giving the course. When he gets back after a heavy day they share a cup of tea together and play a game of chess, then eat some macaroni and cheese and maybe a salad. Miranda has become more health-conscious, she's insisting on greenery, she's making him eat kale.")[30] But if Felix' sovereignty is in any way precarious, there is no trace of it in the way things play out for the rest of the book. Everything goes according to plan – as it does for Shakespeare's Prospero.

All the more so since Felix' mastery is not a mastery over potentially rebellious sprites and natural forces, as Prospero's is, but depends on more reliable technology. One of Felix' students is a computer hacker and can therefore help out with all things digital: "one day", that hacker is "elbows-deep in cables, the next it's mini-cameras. After that he's installing some tiny microphones and speakers, wireless ones: it would be contraindicated to drill holes in the walls".[31] Douglas Lanier points out that in adapting 'magic' into 'special effects,' 'Hag-Seed' covers up some of the more marvellous, intriguing aspects of 'The Tempest' and integrates them into a firmly realist scenario, thus domesticating Shakespeare's play and making it conform to conventional ideas of literariness.[32] It is often, he implies, precisely the curious inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies (of plot, character, setting) in Shakespearean drama that make for rich opportunities of interpretation and that make the plays resistant against smooth appropriation by any one ideology or critical paradigm. Prospero's magic in 'The Tempest', while not half as murky in source as, say, the three witches' magic in 'Macbeth', is still not quite as straightforward as video sampling and wifi. It does involve, after all, sprites and spirits and the interaction with a nature that, while it can be harnessed to one's power, is still a force to be reckoned with.

And what is more, 'The Tempest' references a more enigmatic craft still – the witchcraft of Sycorax, Caliban's mother, who "could control the moon, make flows and ebbs, | And deal in her command without her power".[33] There's no such murkiness in the novel – there is, simply put, no hag in 'Hag-Seed'. The magic that there is lies in the clever arrangement of technological gadgets as

29 Ibid., p. 14.
30 Ibid., p. 62.
31 Ibid., pp. 169 f.
32 See Douglas M. Lanier: The Hogarth Shakespeare Series, pp. 234 f. For a detailed account on the digital technology in 'Hag-Seed', and quite a different judgment of it as "creatively update[ing]" Prospero's magic, see Howells (True Trash: Genre Fiction Revisited, pp. 311 f.). Lanier argues: "Whereas a genre-fiction approach to adapting the Shakespeare narrative might be primarily plot driven, what marks this approach [i.e., the Hogarth Shakespeare series approach] as 'literary' is its dwelling on the intricacies of biography, its substitution of characterological complexity for the metaphorical density of Shakespeare's language, and the tantalizing gaps and unarticulated motives typical of Shakespeare's handling of character" (Hogarth, p. 238).
33 Willam Shakespeare: Tempest, 5.1.271–2.

well as the perceptive anticipation and deft steering of people's emotional reaction; and Prospero the magician turns into the ingenious, but entirely secular manipulator Felix that he maybe is already half laid out as in Shakespeare's play. There is, of course, little room for idealising Sycorax: there is no reason to assume that her approach to the island and its inhabitants has been any less hierarchical than Prospero's. And yet, with the vanishing of this ominous background figure and the shady craft she stands for, a crucial source of contingency – the possibility of things being different from what we think they are, or things being different in the future from what they are in the present – is exorcised from the novel. Instead, the focus is set exclusively – to put it somewhat derisively – on an old white man's grudges and their mollification. This suppression of magic in favour of a psychologised account bears resemblance is comparable in effect to removing, as Federici describes, the witch-hunts from both the history of the proletariat and colonial history by labelling it a superstitious 'craze'.[34] Dismissing the hag from Shakespeare's play makes a whole thematic complex – precisely that of appropriation, expropriation, colonisation, possibly the criminalisation of poverty – unavailable for discussion. It thoroughly "depoliticize[s]"[35] the figure of 'prison prince', quasi-coloniser Felix and, by extension, Prospero.

If Atwood's portrayal of Felix and his success, the way his prison teachings and revenge plot go down oh-so-smoothly, is ironic, the irony is hard to spot. Felix turns out to be the perfect teacher. The man who Felix replaces at Fletcher Correctional never, it is suggested, got anywhere with his students. From the administrator of the programme, Estelle, Felix learns: "The teacher who'd died had been such a fine person ... . He'd really tried, up at Fletcher; he'd accomplished [...] well, he'd done his very best, under conditions that were ... no one could go into it expecting too much".[36] Estelle's judgement of Felix's work, in contrast, after he's run a couple of courses in the programme, is: "You've done wonders with them!"[37] Where Prospero needs to rely on force to make the inhabitants of his colony to his bidding ("If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly | What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps"),[38] Felix plays the prison inmates like puppets on a string. Measuring out the ingredients of his behaviour like a chef balancing aromas, he always assesses the chemistry of action-reaction correctly.

The instance in which Felix brings his pupils round to approve of Prospero's behaviour is a good example: the class is clearly inclined to take Caliban's side; there are "frowns. Jaw-tightenings. Definite hostility toward Prospero", who they call "a slave-driver".[39] Felix reasons that Prospero has "the right of self-defence"[40]: physically speaking, Caliban is stronger than him and Miranda, and other than the young Caliban, the grown-up Caliban harbours evil intentions (raping Miranda, killing her father). In spite of "mutters" and "scowls", "most hands go

34 See Silvia Federici: Caliban, p. 164.
35 Ibid.
36 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 50 (first ellipsis mine).
37 Ibid., p. 68.
38 Willam Shakespeare: Tempest, 1.2.369–70.
39 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 127.
40 Ibid., p. 128.

up, reluctantly" in a vote.[41] Only one of the inmates, Red Coyote, refuses and points out – quite rightly so – that self-defence and exploitation are not the same thing. When Felix argues that Prospero could act more drastically and kill Caliban, Red Coyote retorts: "Says it himself, he wants the work out of him [...]. Picking up the firewood, washing the dishes. Plus, he does the same thing to Ariel".[42] Felix' response is patchy – it doesn't even address Caliban, or the opportunism involved in granting somebody mercy and then putting them to good use: "[Prospero] still has the right to defend himself, no? And the single way he can do that is through his magic, which is effective only as long as he has Ariel running errands for him. If tethering Ariel on a magic string – a temporary magic string – was the only weapon you had, you'd do the same. Yes?" And, through the 'magic' of Felix' powers of persuasion, "there's general agreement".[43] The session ends with Felix looking "around the classroom, smiling benevolently"[44] as Prospero's ploys are judged as "cool"[45] by the class and the goblins they will all perform as a second role as "neat".[46]

The votes (two of them, actually) in which Felix lets the class decide whether they approve of Prospero are thus only mock-democratic: Felix has decades of experience in reading Shakespeare and convincing others of his own interpretation, whereas most of his pupils are entirely new to the exercise. The principle of imprisonment stays intact even in this sense, then. What looks like free choice is really a matter of coercion or, to put it a little less drastically, nudging – all the more so since the players are cast to a large extent for their crimes, that is, in their role as convicts, to begin with: in the first session of the course, Felix

> [g]azes around the room, already casting the roles in his head. There's his perfect Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, gazing at him with round, ingenuous eyes as if ready to fall in love: WonderBoy, the con artist. There's his Ariel, unless he's much mistaken, elemental air spirit, slender and adroit, scintillating with cool juvenile intelligence: 8Handz, genius black-hat hacker. A podgy Gonzalo, the boring, worthy councillor: Bent Pencil, the warped accountant. And Antonio, the magician Prospero's treacherous, usurping brother: SnakeEye, the Ponzi schemer and real-estate fraudster, with his slanted left eye and lopsided mouth that make him look as if he's sneering.[47]

It is therefore not only as if the events and power dynamics in 'Hag-Seed' do not offer much of an alternative to the dynamics of appropriation and confinement in 'The Tempest'; in some sense, they offer even less. Felix's perspective on the events unfolding is ineluctable for the reader; not only because there is no other narrative perspective available but also because there is not a single foothold, as it were – such as the witch in the background can, potentially, provide in readings of 'The Tempest' – for reading Felix's account against the grain (besides the fact that maybe things go a little *too* well, a little *too* smoothly).

41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., p. 131.
45 Ibid., p. 130.
46 Ibid., p. 131.
47 Ibid., pp. 83 f.

Lanier points out, too, that "Caliban's rebelliousness, and especially his mistreatment by Prospero and Miranda, figure rather little in Atwood's novel", as Felix's Caliban, Leggs, "never disrupts Felix's plans", whose "ultimate benevolence and control are never in doubt".[48] Lanier argues that this conveys a generalisation of the 'Calibanic' state of existence, in which we are all prisoners in one way or the other.[49] Arguably (and I read Lanier as implying the same thing), this general reflection on the human condition serves to obfuscate processes of marginalisation – imprisonment, for instance – much more directly than it serves to expose them. Lanier makes the point that overall, one of the persistent themes of the Hogarth series is redemption – and that explicitly includes the redemption of Felix-Prospero in 'Hag-Seed'.[50] The "tendency to flesh out the protagonists' psychologies" provides them with "extensive backstories and explicit chains of motivation that make their behavior plausible (and suitably complicated) for the reader well-versed in contemporary psychoanalysis".[51] The effect, according to Lanier, is "to purge Shakespeare's narrative of its ideologically retrograde aspects and thereby make it unproblematically, triumphantly redemptive in the retelling".[52]

In some regards, then, Atwood's novel is a lot less subversive than the Shakespearean play potentially is – whether or not an Early Modern audience felt that Prospero's behaviour needed an excuse, certainly a sizeable chunk of a contemporary one does.[53] In some ways, Felix Phillips does atone for his/Prospero's sins: he does point out to his class that 'The Tempest' ends with Prospero asking for release, even forgiveness. He does release his daughter from the 'prison' of his imagination at the end of the text. However, the novel equally ends with Felix-Prospero embarking on a cruise ship bound for the Caribbean, where he will give lectures on his accomplishments at Fletcher Correctional to, as he himself puts it, "old people [...] snoozing in deck chairs and doing line-dancing".[54] The young hacker responsible for the special effects in the play has been granted early parole, and he will, Felix plans, "recite some of his Ariel speeches during Felix's presentations" on the cruise.[55] None of this indicates an actual shift in established power dynamics. And therefore, even though through our empathy for the main character Felix, Prospero might be to some degree absolved, this circumstance clashes rather uncomfortably with the fact that for all *our* insight

48 Ibid., pp. 245 f. And further, Lanier notes that it is "striking [...] that the Hogarth Shakespeare novels that have appeared so far fall within a somewhat narrow transpositional range". Its protagonists "hail from roughly the same social stratum; they are from the middle to upper-middle class, college-educated professionals, engaged in intellectual labor" (Hogarth, p. 234).

49 See ibid., p. 246.

50 See Douglas M. Lanier's text for similarities throughout the other Shakespeare adaptations in the Hogarth series.

51 Ibid., p. 238.

52 Ibid., p. 244.

53 Regarding the issue of historicity, Philip Smith in fact argues that 'Hag-Seed' "is a novel-length meditation on the modern reader's relationship with Shakespeare. Atwood seeks to challenge the recurring mythology of a prescient, essentialist, and ahistorical Shakespeare by suggesting that whenever the modern subject seeks to understand his or her experience through Shakespeare, both Shakespeare and the experience must be molded, perhaps violently, to facilitate such a confluence" (Margaret Atwood's Tempests, p. 30).

54 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 282.

55 Ibid.

into his character, Felix-Prospero fails to approach his fellow human beings with likewise respect.

The Islands of Tomorrow

At the end of 'The Tempest', Caliban's fate is dealt with in Prospero's curious remark: "this thing of darkness I | Acknowledge mine".[56] One cannot help but wonder what this means, and the players in 'Hag-Seed' feel no different. For them, it can only be an indication of paternity: when, as their final exercise in the Literacy through Literature programme, they have to invent their own version of how the protagonists' lives continue after the play, this line prompts them to envision a secret affair between Sycorax and Prospero, so that Caliban turns out to be Prospero's in quite a literal sense – his son. The interpretation receives "full marks" by Felix – despite the fact that it is rather a bit too obvious.[57] In the students' interpretation, any ties or possessiveness between Prospero and Caliban can only be the 'natural' ties of the nuclear family (father, mother, son). Isn't this an example for the domestication that Lanier mentions, where the idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies, the 'little weirdnesses' of Shakespearean drama, are covered up in favour of a smoother reading of the piece in question?

If we let Prospero's remark stand in its oddness, a more layered interpretation becomes possible, such that in the claim that Caliban is 'his', all the intricacies of the processes of appropriation and resistance that the 'monster' and the 'master' have been involved in make themselves felt. What if "to acknowledge his" here means, not paternity in the conventional sense, but another form of kinship: a realisation on Prospero's part that he has, for better or worse, appropriated Caliban and the resources (land, work force) that he came with, and that they are now "his" to deal with. This would actually indicate a much deeper sense of responsibility – or in fact even a true sense of responsibility to begin with – because this responsibility, however dubious, develops irrespective of any conventionally pre-established familial responsibility; it acknowledges ties that have formed through voluntary acts, not through naturalised connections (of race, species, class, etc.). Under the cover of paternity, such processes of appropriation remain invisible and non-addressable, eluding critique.[58]

It is such instances of doubt or dubiousness, such points of non-clarity that can serve – as they do in the class exercise, but only to be cut short – as the

56 Willam Shakespeare: Tempest, 5.1.275–6.
57 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 268.
58 Compare Bryant's reading of the phrase, who suggests that in it we see "a frustrated Prospero grappling with regret and with the difficult question of who is now responsible for what Caliban has become under his oppressive and profoundly damaging imperial order. This issue of accountability is only reinforced by the final uncertainty of Caliban's fate, and the question of whether or not he leaves the island with Prospero ultimately goes unanswered", which makes for a fundamental "ambiguity of this final scene" (Towards the Desertion of Sycorax's Island, p. 108). A more sinister reading is, of course, likewise possible: "The violence of slavery is abolished at a stroke and Caliban becomes just another feudal retainer whom Prospero can 'acknowledge mine' (5.1.276). This is the wish-fulfillment of the European colonist: his natural superiority voluntarily recognized" (Peter Hulme quoted in Irene Lara: Beyond Caliban's Curses, p. 85).

beginnings of new imaginaries. 'Hag-Seed', however – to circle back to Deleuze's essay – treats its island, that is, its prison in the spirit of the "philosophically normal": forgetting what it represents and taking the exclusions it performs and the spaces of the 'main' and the 'margin' it thereby generates for granted. The prison in 'Hag-Seed' is a stage for Felix' revenge, nothing more, nothing less; its guards are forever deferential towards him, and its inhabitants fall smoothly under his spell as teacher. All the magic there is that of digital engineering commissioned in the service of that principal objective: getting even.

On the face of it, the ending of Shakespeare's 'Tempest' is likewise one of dis-enchantment, and Prospero's magic, it might equally be argued, is not so different from clever engineering – though following a paper, not a digital rulebook. His "rough magic", Prospero says towards the end of the play, he will abjure:

> [...] and when I have required
> Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book.[59]

Then again, how thorough is this disenchantment? What the play leaves us with is, after all, besides Prospero's rejection of magic, an amazement at the very possibility of being enchanted to begin with. For even though by the end of 'The Tempest', Prospero's "strength" is, by his own account, "most faint", by the very logic of the epilogue his theatrical/rhetorical power remains undiminished – the spell of the play is in place as long as the quasi-magical ritual of clapping hands remains unperformed ("Let me not [...] dwell | In this bare island by your spell; | But release me from my bands | With the help of your good hands").[60] Likewise, Prospero's promise that he will drown his books is accompanied by a simultaneous assertion that he was indeed quite capable of such marvellous and terrifying acts as "bedimm[ing] the noontide sun" and having graves "wak[e] their sleepers".[61] In other words, while Prospero himself abjures magic at the end of 'The Tempest', in no way is the possibility of enchantment itself in question.

Deleuze, for all his visions of poetic inhabitation by "dreamers" and "beautiful witches", points out that a perfect symbiosis of islands and humans, geography and imagination, matter and psyche is unachievable (maybe even undesirable?). The ultimate irreconcilability between humans and islands can, according to Deleuze, only ever be transcended – and only ever *approximately* transcended, in fact – in an act of the imagination:

> [S]ince human beings, even voluntarily, are not identical to the movement that puts them on the island [...] they always encounter it from the outside, and their presence in fact spoils its desertedness. The unity of the deserted island and its inhabitant is thus not actual, only imaginary, like the idea of looking behind the curtain when one is not behind it.[62]

59 William Shakespeare: Tempest, 5.1.50–57.
60 Ibid., Epilogue 5-10.
61 Ibid., 5.1.41–49.
62 Gilles Deleuze: Desert Islands, p. 11.

Significantly, the imaginary deserted island can neither be produced by one person alone, nor can it be dreamed in private – in Federici's terms, we might say that it needs both the commons, and it needs the witch: "it is doubtful whether the individual imagination, unaided, could raise itself up to such an admirable identity; it would require the *collective* imagination, what is most profound in it, i.e. rites and mythology".[63]The ending of 'The Tempest' preserves, precisely, the collective imagination from disenchantment. While Prospero might abjure magic at the end, magic does not therefore vanish; and even if we read the play, as is commonly done, as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage, theatrical magic does not therefore stop working, rather the opposite: prompts – such as Prospero's for applause in his epilogue – keep travelling easily from the theatrical world into the 'real' one that is, supposedly, its master. *This* play might end, even *this* career, but the rites of the collective imagination as such are in no way diminished in power. 'The Tempest', then, for all its restorative tendencies – restoring political and social order in Prospero's return and Miranda's marriage – preserves desert islands as what they are: repositories of liberative fantasies. And this is not because 'The Tempest' gives us a utopian island community, far from it; but because, through the shady figures that it does not *quite* repress – Sycorax the "blue-eyed hag"; magic that can raise the dead – it gives us the very doubt that challenges the imagination towards alternatives.

In the afterlife that, in their final assignment, Felix's class conceptualises for Caliban, the "thing of darkness" becomes a rock star. Significantly, the group does not only envision this fate, they actually perform an extra number that is tentatively intended to be the beginning of a musical. This leaves Felix somewhat uncomfortable:

> Felix is intrigued: Caliban has escaped the play. He's escaped from Prospero, like a shadow detaching itself from its body and skulking off on its own. Now there's no one to restrain him. Will Prospero be spared, or will retribution climb in through his window one dark night and cut his weasand? Felix wonders. Gingerly, feels his neck.[64]

A subterranean sense of threat from the earthy creatures of this world remains for Felix Phillips. Then again, those creatures are, in all probability, not allowed on cruise ships.

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63 Ibid. (my emphasis).
64 Margaret Atwood: Hag-Seed, p. 272.

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Of Boats and Walls

Migrating Iconographies

> "So far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence."

Migrating Iconographies: History and Art

According to Susan Sontag "[i]deologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings".[1] These images generate and transport cultural meaning contributing to shaping the present, re-evaluating the past, and envisioning the future. The iconic status of historical boats and walls, such as the 'Mayflower' in America and the 'Endeavour' in Australia, or the Great Wall of China, foregrounds the power of "'condensation symbols,' or emblematic images"[2] to represent a period, encouraging a shared, unifying and homogenizing reception in national memory cultures. While these images are bound to specific contexts, they may change over time "in their import, range of reference, applicability, comprehensibility, and appropriateness".[3] Thus the established national celebration of the iconic boat in settler countries evokes different associations in the context of contemporary migration politics, foregrounding previously submerged contradictions in national narratives. A striking example of these shifts is the visual construction of Australia as a migrant nation in the National Maritime Museum in Sydney harbour, which not only features a reconstruction of James Cook's ship 'Endeavour' to visualize the foundation myth of the settler colony, but also includes displays commemorating the more recent arrival of migrants and refugees on Australian shores. In this context two exhibits of a boat and a wall are placed within close proximity: the Vietnamese refugee boat 'Tu Do' with 31 survivors being welcomed from totalitarianism into freedom in Darwin harbour during the Second Cold War (1977), and the 100 meter long and 2.8 metres high Welcome Wall (est. 1997), inviting migrants to Australia to have their names inscribed on the wall. However, in the current situation the museum's exhibit of the Vietnamese boat called 'Freedom' turns into an ironic reference to the treatment of refugees who seek asylum in Australia at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, when 'boat people' are turned back or arrested and transferred to (offshore) detention centres, while the notion of the wall as welcoming sign in

1 Susan Sontag: Regarding the Pain of Others, p. 86; motto also by her.
2 Jeffrey Olick: The Politics of Regret, p. 108.
3 Ibid., p. 109.

the Maritime Museum ironically resonates with current calls for building walls against migrants, evoking histories of division as most famously materialized in the Berlin Wall. In the context of the current global resurgence of calls for border fortification, the Berlin Wall is invested with renewed significance and affective, emotional and symbolic potential beyond its immediate German and European context. As migration is inevitably both, a transnational and a localized phenomenon connected to specific memory cultures, iconic uses of the boat and the wall call upon different associations in different contexts. The examples of the 'Tu Do' and the Welcome Wall in the Maritime Museum foreground how site-specificity can generate unintended (and unwanted) side-effects in the (inter)national reception of official iconographies. These examples foreground the potential of the boat and the wall as iconic markers of reinforcing but also of unsettling and challenging notions of national unity and identity.

Contemporary art across different media and genres engages with the affective, emotional and ideological implications of the boat and the wall and explores the tensions and contradictions of their use in different historical and cultural contexts, with the aim to build transnational human solidarity communities. The immediate world-wide dissemination of cultural products tapping into different histories and memory cultures attempts to work towards a new definition of activism in art in the context of the current unprecedented global humanitarian and planetary crises.[4] The hope for "creating global solidarity groups"[5] is vitally connected to a "globally shared knowledge of others' pasts"[6] as precondition for the emergence of "cosmopolitan memory" enabl[ing] 'horizontal' connections between smaller memory communities".[7] However, as Kennedy and Radstone have pointed out, it is necessary to take into account "the power relations that play into the *direction* in which mnemonic symbols travel, the interests served by the sometimes incorporative thrust of transnational remembering and the apparently location-specific or even resistant aspects of those elements that remain outside the transnational field".[8]

This concern is particularly important with regard to histories of victimization and trauma, as research about the interaction of the Holocaust memory with different national, social and cultural memories has shown. The terms "multidirectional memory"[9] and "cosmopolitan memory"[10] are connected to the hope for the development of new alliances in the strife for human rights and social justice.[11] However, in contrast to defining and embracing cosmopolitanism in terms of "a

4 Ann Rigney has pointed out the intricate interrelations between memory and activism identifying distinctions between "*memory activism* (how actors struggle to produce cultural memory and to steer future remembrance, as described in Gutman, 2017), the *memory of activism* (how earlier struggles for a better world are culturally recollected, as described in Katriel and Reading, 2015), and *memory in activism* (how the cultural memory of earlier struggles informs new movements in the present, as set out in Eyerman, 2016)" (Ann Rigney: Remembering Hope, p. 372).
5 Siobhan Brownlie: Mapping Memory in Translation, p. 17.
6 Ibid., p. 183.
7 Rosanne Kennedy, Susannah Radstone: Memory up close, p. 241.
8 Ibid., p. 238.
9 See Michael Rothberg: Multidirectional Memory.
10 See Daniel Levy, Natan Sznaider: Memory Unbound.
11 See Daniel Levy, Natan Sznaider: Cosmopolitan Memory and Human Rights.

willingness to engage with the Other [...] through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting"[12] and a "delight in difference",[13] the term has also been criticized, particularly by feminist and postcolonial scholars as encouraging a commodification of difference within the frame of late capitalist consumer culture.[14] Nevertheless, despite an acknowledgement of the danger of a misuse of the concept as "a superficial, opportunistic reuse of the other's history"[15] flattening out differences and thus ultimately as a form of forgetting, there remains an insistence on the necessity of such a shared cosmopolitan memory culture "based on the concept of human rights and the idea of global citizenship, whereby an individual may embrace an affinity and empathy with global others as one of his or her identifications".[16]

Contemporary art forms appealing to collective social memory and individual embodied memory simultaneously, tend to foreground the experiential quality of memory,[17] often turning to affect as intended effect, which seems to promise a universal visceral response. Approaches to affect as decisive precognitive force beyond representation have sometimes tended to ignore that "representations are always imagistic and thinking is distributed through the body".[18] However, such a conceptualisation of an intricate interrelation between affect, emotion and representation[19] is decisive for an understanding of contemporary art forms, particularly those evoking traumatic histories of escape, displacement and death, which rely on the capacity of the spectator to be affected by "[c]ultural products that strongly engage the senses and emotions [...] allow[ing] these products to be appreciated transnationally and transculturally",[20] even if they relate to "a past event through which he or she did not live" as Alison Landsberg remarks in her analysis of "prosthetic memory".[21] According to Landsberg "[i]n the best cases, prosthetic memories can produce empathy and thereby enable a person to establish a political connection with someone from a different class, race or ethnic position.[22]

In this essay I will explore the global impact of iconographies of the boat and the wall in the context of current issues of migration and border fortification, as visible in four specific recent art projects: Christoph Büchel's 'Barca Nostra / Our Boat' (Venice Biennale 2019), Ai Weiwei's 'Law of the Journey' (Prague 2017, Sydney Biennale 2018), Natascha Sadr Haghighian's installation 'Ankersentrum /

12 Ulf Hannerz: Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture, p. 239.
13 Ibid.
14 See Arjun Appadurai: Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy; Timothy Brennan.
15 Siobhan Brownlie: Mapping Memory in Translation, pp. 185 f.
16 Ibid., p. 183. This ties in with Rothberg's argument that "when the productive, intercultural dynamic of multidirectional memory is explicitly claimed, [...] it has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (Michael Rothberg: Multidirectional Memory, p. 5).
17 On the importance of the experiential mode for an understanding of memory, see Alison Landsberg: Engaging the Past.
18 Felicity Callard, Constantina Papoulias: Affect and Embodiment, p. 257 (with reference to António Damásio).
19 See António Damásio: The Strange Order of Things; Sara Ahmed: Afterword.
20 Siobhan Brownlie: Mapping Memory in Translation, p. 184 on digital connectivity.
21 Alison Landsberg: Prosthetic Memory, p. 2.
22 Ibid., p. 48.

Surviving the Ruinous Ruin' (Venice Biennale 2019), and Ilya Khrzhanovsky's immersive 'DAU Project' (Paris 2019). The examples range from art installations to immersive art evoking geographically and historically different contexts, raising questions about how art copes with the difficulty of speaking to locally, culturally and politically differently situated audiences at specific exhibition sites.[23] While all four examples use site-specificity to activate response, they employ different forms of the experiential mode involving different strategies to engage the audience in affective and cognitive processes, encouraging links between recent and/or more distant historical events. Despite their different – and often controversial – strategies, all four projects build upon the tensions between the universality of images of the boat and the wall and the specificity of distinct histories and life stories in an attempt to unsettle audience complacency and to disrupt a problematic reassuring feeling with 'the pain of Others', which denies – in Susan Sontag's above quotation – the spectators' complicity in their suffering.

Of Boats: The Affective Power of Materiality in Christoph Büchel's 'Barca Nostra / Our Boat' (Venice Biennale 2019) and Ai Weiwei's 'Law of the Journey' (Prague 2017, Sydney Biennale 2018)

The international Venice Biennale 2019 resonated in unexpected ways with the official form of commemoration in the Sydney Maritime Museum, focussing on the affective power of the boat and the wall in our age of migration, albeit in decisively different ways. While the installation in the German pavilion by artist Natascha Sadr Haghighian 'Ankersentrum / 'Surviving the Ruinous Ruin' probed the impact of notions of the wall in contemporary debates about migration and its historical resonances, the project by Swiss performance artist Christoph Büchel, entitled 'Barca Nostra / Our Boat' brought a boat with an actual history of death and trauma into the centre of the art world. As many reviewers have pointed out, the "defining display at the 58th Venice Biennale [...] [was] a fishing boat, with huge gashes in its hull, [...] stationed in the Arsenale, the old dockyards of the Venetian Republic. Designed to carry about 15 passengers, it sank in the Mediterranean Sea in April 2015, with more than 800 migrants who had left from Tripoli, Libya. All but 27 died".[24] Only a short distance away from the luxury yachts and cruise ships taking anchor in the city, the vessel was placed without signs or explanatory information (apart from the Biennale catalogue) next to a café, whose customers were faced with the opening that had to be cut into the vessel to retrieve the corpses.[25] While initially visitors passed by without taking much notice, assuming the boat to be a rusting remainder of the former

23 These processes of translation into different contexts gain additional importance in light of the immediate global availability of images and videoclips of these art works via social media (and YouTube).
24 Andrew Russeth: Don't Turn Away.
25 "Den Cafébesucher*innen zugewandt ist jene Öffnung, die geschnitten werden musste, um Leichen aus dem Frachtraum zu bergen" (Claudia Wahjudi: Berlin in Venedig).

dockyard,[26] 'Barca Nostra' gradually turned into an icon of this Biennale. This raises questions about the tension between the real world and artistic representation, the material and the symbolic, as well as questions about the emotionally, ethically, and politically charged implications and limits of processes of such a translation into the context of an art exhibition. The site of this exhibited "empty mass grave"[27] opened a debate about the display as a desecration of the victims (even leading to a petition for its removal), or as effective shock tactics necessary to unsettle the spectator position and to forge an alliance against forgetting the victims of the disaster.[28]

In their discussion of 'Barca Nostra' in the context of relational art practices, Eleanor Paynter and Nicole Miller raise concerns that "[i]n the absence of a clear question posed by the work, the ensuing debate risks alienating audiences from the boat's material history, obscuring the gravity of current migration issues".[29] According to Büchel it is precisely this process of a controversial public engagement with 'Barca Nostra' that was central to his project. His team's statement emphasizes that "physical signage and explanatory text at the Arsenale would disrupt the process by which questions are raised, assumptions are made, intentions are projected onto the project, and a meaningful debate ensues".[30] In the course of the Biennale, the presentation of the boat withholding all further information drew attention to the dehumanizing anonymization of the "boat people", while motivating the visitors of an international art exhibition as well as the local population to acquire knowledge about the lives of the deceased. The affective charge of 'Barca Nostra' was bound to the knowledge of its history, encouraging the spectators to remember and reread the coverage of the actual event,[31] in order to take part in a movement against a politics of forgetting. This gained additional urgency in light of the 2019 directive of the Italian government to arraign and fine all NGO rescue organizations setting refugees ashore in Italy, and the subsequent arrest of the German captain of Sea Watch 3, Carola Rackete, after her dramatic docking in Lampedusa with 40 migrants. In this context Büchel's 'Barca Nostra' can be seen as a contribution to making the consequences of the refusal to allow refugees to enter European shores visible and felt, not only as a site of

26 "Es sind in den ersten Tagen Leute achtlos vorbeigelaufen, weil sie dachten, es sei ein Rostmobiliar der ehemaligen Werftanlage" (Siegmund Kopitzki: Die Barca Nostra auf der Biennale – ist das Kunst?).

27 Andrew Russeth: Don't Turn Away.

28 "['Barca Nostra' represents] a relic of a human tragedy but also a monument to contemporary migration, engaging real and symbolic borders and the (im)possibility of freedom of movement of information and people" foregrounding "our mutual responsibility representing the collective policies and politics that create such wrecks" (Elisabetta Povoledo: Wreck of Migrant Ship That Killed Hundreds Will Be Displayed at Venice Biennale). "This devastating relic is positioned right next to a cafe, where art-worlders in Ferragamo trainers gossip without paying the slightest attention. Not even half a moment of silence. To walk past this appalling conjunction is to hang one's head in shame. How can it possibly be presented here, of all places, as a memorial, still less an exhibit?" (Laura Cumming: Venice Biennale 2019 review – preaching to the converted).

29 Eleanor Paynter, Nicole Miller: The White Readymade and the Black Mediterranean: Authoring Barca Nostra. See also Javier Pes, Naomi Rea: 'Absolutely Vile' or 'Powerful'? Christoph Büchel's Migrant Boat is the Most Divisive Work at the Venice Biennale.

30 Ibid.; see also Cristina Ruiz: Fierce debate over Christoph Büchel's Venice Biennale display of boat that sank with hundreds locked in hull.

31 See Eleanor Paynter, Nicole Miller: The White Readymade and the Black Mediterranean.

mourning for the deceased, but also as the site of an open gashing wound left by a crime against humanity.[32]

Challenging the distinction between aesthetic and social spheres[33] is equally yet differently central to Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei's art installations about the fate of refugees worldwide, designed for global audiences. In 2016 Ai wrapped 14,000 life jackets "previously worn by fleeing refugees on their journeys across waterways to reach Europe"[34] around the columns of the concert house on the Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin and distributed 1,005 more in the shape of lotus flowers forming an 'f' on a lake on the premises of Belvedere Palace in Vienna, thus incorporating additional layers of displacement in his work in order to raise questions about responsibilities and an ethics of response with regard to different contexts.[35] His installation 'Laundromat' (Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, New York 2016; now permanently Kunstsammlung Düsseldorf) consisted of 2,046 pieces of clothing left behind in the refugee camp of the Greek border village of Idomeni, which were cleaned, ironed and arranged "according to gender, age and garment type" on exceptionally high clothing racks "through which visitors could wander" as in "a retail store".[36] As far as possible, traces of the former wearers were eliminated. In contrast to Büchel's 'Barca Nostra' withholding any detailed information, "the walls and floor were wrapped in newsreels, encasing the clothing display in associated images and headlines. [...] A documentary accompanied the exhibition, showing footage of refugees at the Idomeni camp and the cleaning process undertaken for the exhibition".[37] The affective power of the exhibit 'Laundromat' lies in the tension between the image of a retail store and the spectators' knowledge who wore these clothes and under what circumstances. The line-up of garments and shoes testify to the nameless refugees' experiences[38] in dehumanizing camps while foregrounding the spectators' distance to it.

In the context of Ai's engagement with material objects relating to the experience of migration, his installation 'Law of the Journey' (2017) turns the global image of the small refugee boat into a monumental 60-metre long inflatable black rubber raft mounted on a timber base filled with anonymous faceless rubber figures in life jackets 'floating' above the heads of the spectators in metropolitan

32 "Its presence feels at once obscene and essential at the most closely watched art exhibition in the world" (Andrew Russeth: Don't Turn Away).
33 See Eleanor Paynter, Nicole Miller for the collapse of the distinction between aesthetic and social spheres in regard to 'Barca Nostra'.
34 Natasha Noman: Ai Weiwei Hung 14,000 Refugee Life Jackets on a Berlin Concert Hall.
35 "His work F-Lotus consists of 1005 used life vests, each of which has been worn by a Syrian refugee, stitched into a series of 201 lotus flower-like rings, which the artist has installed on the baroque pond in the grounds surrounding the 21er Haus. [...] The letter 'f' in Ai's work refers to a mildly offensive English-Mandarin homonym, which is sometimes used by anti-governmental activists as a gesture of defiance" (Phaion: Ai Weiwei floats life-vest lotus flowers in Vienna).
36 Julie Macindoe: Ai Weiwei's Laundromat and the Aesthetics of Displacement.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.: "Standing at attention in a gallery in downtown New York, these shoes were ghostly, leaving no foot prints of where they've been. For refugees who walked the migration trail, shoes were the functional and metaphorical contact point with shifting ideas of place and home. But in their existence, the shoes also stood on behalf of those who once wore them, testifying to their experience".

cities, such as Prague (National Gallery 2017) and Sydney (Biennale 2018).[39] Like 'Barca Nostra' the installation comments on the dehumanization of the "boat people", who literally merge with the boat, the material of which was provided by "a Chinese factory that also manufactures the precarious vessels used by thousands of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea",[40] while the visitors' 'submerged' perspective from below does not lend itself to encourage a problematic identification with those lost at sea, but rather dis-eases the spectator's distanced position. Like 'Laundromat', Ai Weiwei's 'Law of the Journey' is accompanied by additional visual and written material. Thus, a wall covered with cellphone-pictures of refugees and their plight taken during the filming of Ai's large scale documentary film 'Human Flow' (2017)[41] serves to counter their anonymity and alleged homogeneity and draws visual attention to the scale of this humanitarian crisis. Quotes from writers ranging from Socrates to Kafka to Hannah Arendt to Zadie Smith on the fate of refugees and on notions of humanity accompany the visitors' walk along the exhibit. The installation is complemented with four videos – 'At Sea' (2016), 'On the Boat' (2016), 'Floating' (2016) and 'Drifting' (2017) – focussing on the refugees in the Mediterranean sea and the artist's attempt to capture their plight. This multi-media commentary can be either read as a form of distrust of the affective potential of the boat, or as an enriching offer based on the belief in a necessary interaction of affective and cognitive aspects in the receptive process.

Taking up the dehumanizing term of the "boat people" Christoph Büchel and Ai Weiwei make use of material traces of the refugees' journey foregrounding the haunting absence of those to whose fate the affluent consumer societies around the globe largely contributed. The affective potential of Büchel's 'Barca Nostra' and Ai's installation objects resides in these traces of the refugees' life stories. Both artists intend to affect the viewer via challenging received patterns of aesthetic consumption via 'displacing' their exhibits into culturally and historically charged exhibition sites or into public spaces of metropolitan city centres in order to generate site-specific resonances. Büchel's 'Barca Nostra' at the Venice Biennale instigated a public debate about Italian immigration policy, while the display of Ai's inflatable boat at the Sydney Biennale called upon the context of Australian immigration policies in light of the foundational myth of Australia as immigrant nation. Its display at the exhibition site in the National Gallery in Prague not only called upon European migration policies, but also upon the use of the building as assembly point for Jews before their deportation to Theresienstadt during World War II.[42] Despite their differences, these projects share the concern about the current "refugee crisis" and comment on the central involvement and responsibility of Western civilisations (in Europe, North Amer-

39 Andrew Frost: Sydney Bienanale review: "Over at Cockatoo Island, another kind of political art is on display. Ai Weiwei's 'Law of the Journey' (2018) is a gigantic, space-filling sculpture, an elongated and oversized life raft filled with huge bodies of adults and children, the entire thing mounted on a timber base inscribed with quotes attesting to the importance of a humane refugee policy".

40 Nicholas Carolan: Ai Weiwei Journeys to the Ends of the Earth.

41 See press release by biennaleofsydney.art.

42 See See Gessato: Law Of The Journey By Ai Weiwei.

ica and Australia) in the development of this crisis as a result of a long record of (economic) exploitation, foregrounding the interconnectedness of localized histories in a globalized world.

Of Walls: Translation Matters in Natascha Sadr Haghighian's Ankersentrum / Surviving the Ruinous Ruin (Venice Biennale 2019) and Ilya Khrzhanovsky's DAU Project (Paris 2019)

While Büchel and Ai's exhibits of boats focus primarily on contemporary issues of migration, Haghighian's and Khrzhanovsky's wall-related projects draw attention to the continuation of the past into the present, taken on as an act of translation, which recognizes – as Sue Lieberman argues – "[t]he emergence of experience [...] into conscious memory" as "a process of translation into symbolic form. [...] whether that shape takes verbal or other expressive form".[43] In this context Siobhan Brownlie uses the term "critical processual translation" to refer to "multiple types of cultural transaction involving transfer, interpretation and transformation not only as the movement from one language to another and from one text to another, but from one genre/medium to another, from personal event to text, from one generation to another".[44] Such an understanding of translation in terms of "creative negotiations of difference"[45] calls upon the ethical responsibilities at stake.[46] In the current age of a global dissemination and reception of images and (hi)stories, the question of how "mnemonic processes unfold across and beyond cultures",[47] gains particular urgency for contemporary art forms engaging with histories of exploitation and oppression, victimization and trauma. Such histories are addressed in the art projects by Haghighian and Khrzhanovsky, which centre on material and metaphorical walls as ambivalent signs of fortification against "intruding" others and of incarceration of those "inside". As forms of (trans)cultural translation they involve complex mechanisms of remembering and forgetting and raise fundamental questions about the ethical demands on artists and spectators in this process.

Highlighting different aspects of translation between languages, cultures, and histories of trauma, the art project presented in the German pavilion 'Ankersentrum / Surviving in the Ruinous Ruin' at the Venice Biennale 2019, curated by Franciska Zólyom, (director of the Gallery for Contemporary Art in Leipzig), encourages spatial and temporal connections. The project takes up distinct historical resonances of notions of the wall in relation to contemporary debates about migration, foregrounding interlingual and intermedial forms of

43 Sue Lieberman: Translating Silence, p. 332.
44 Siobhan Brownlie: Mapping Memory in Translation, pp. 2 f. (with reference to Bella Brodzki: Can these Bones Live? Translation, Survival, and Cultural Memory)
45 Sandra Bermann: Introduction, p. 5.
46 Ibid., p. 7: "If we must translate in order to emancipate and preserve cultural pasts and to build linguistic bridges for present understandings and future thought, we must do so while attempting to respond ethically to each language's contexts, intertexts, and intrinsic alterity".
47 Astrid Erll: Travelling Memory, p. 9.

translation as 'crossing over'. The pavilion exhibition centrally positioned a huge wall, which revealed itself on the other side as a dam built against flooding and submersion. The title of the project 'Ankersentrum' (Anchor Senter) commented upon and defamiliarized by mis-spelling the 2018 official coinage of the term 'Ankerzentrum' (anchor centre), for refugee registration camps in Germany. The term anchor centre is intended to evoke associations of the successful anchoring of "boat people" on arrival, while camouflaging its actual purpose of denying residence to refugees deemed not qualified for asylum. Moreover, the coinage of 'Ankerzentrum' replaced the term 'Auffang*lager*' (reception camp) because of its potential associations with the term 'Konzentrations*lager*' (concentration camp) in Nazi Germany. The artist's alteration of the political coinage and spelling ties in with Jeffrey Olick's discussion of images and phrases "as mnemonic lightning rods" within specific contexts.[48] In addition, the Biennale project explored the implications of the German words 'Duldung' (toleration), and 'Festung' (fortification), which have emerged in the German national context during the current 'refugee crisis'. The link back to Nazi-history was underlined by the site-specificity of the German pavilion in Venice, originally built in 1909 and transformed in the monumental architectural style of the Nazi-period in 1938, still welcoming visitors today into "Germania", embossed in huge letters above the entrance portal.[49] Consequently blocking this main entry the artist asked the visitors in through a back door with the promise to open up a new experiential space appealing to different senses.[50]

The visitors entered a room which was dominated by metal structures equipped with loudspeakers reminiscent of the construction sites of provisionally erected fenced-off camps. However, rather than evoking the voice of authorities giving orders, the sound installation 'Tribute to Whistle' by a group of international musicians and composers brought into play the whistle as symbol of resistance against deportation. The huge nine-metre-high concrete wall in the main space of the exhibition with a tiny opening leaving traces of an undefined black liquid on the floor meandering between scattered stone blocks ironized the rhetoric of a necessary fortification against the threat of a 'flooding' of Europe by migrants. At the same time, it triggered associations with the Berlin Wall as a symbol of enforced division preventing free mobility. In an adjacent space, staples of plastic fruit and vegetable crates and an Italian tomato advertisement were placed to evoke associations with the exploitation of migrant workers in Italy. The project thus emphasized the situatedness within the German context, drawing upon iconic images and verbal phrases connected to the German past and present, while opening up associative links across different cultural and historical boundaries, alluding to the implication of global consumers.

In this context, the visibility of the artist as cultural translator[51] gains particular relevance and raises questions about whether and how the artist's engagement contributes to the intended effect of creating transnational solidarity

48 Jeffrey Olick: The Politics of Regret, p. 113.
49 See Sarah Alberti: "Jeder Stein trägt Geschichte in sich".
50 See Deutscher Pavillon Pressemitteilung.
51 On the call for a visibility of the translator see Lawrence Venuti: The Translator's Invisibility.

communities. In the opening event of the German exhibition, the artist Natascha Sadr Haghighian, a professor of Sculpture at the Bremen Art School, appeared in a doubly mediated form, taking on the persona of Natascha Süder Happelmann, a name generated via autocorrection and misspellings of the artist's name in bureaucratic contexts, while her face remained hidden behind a stone mask made of papier-mâché. The artist was a silent bystander throughout the opening event, while her official statement was read out by her speaker called 'Helene Duldung' (Helen Toleration) or – even more appropriate in this context – Helen Suspension of Deportation. The masked artist also appears in two videos of eight- and ten-minute duration, available on the project homepage. The first video features the artist walking along wired fences and stopping in front of guarded gates and barriers blocking off barrack-like buildings, while the sounds of passing cars mix with those of musical instruments tuning the note of A. In the second video the masked artist walks across a sheer endless unploughed field, stops at clearly marked Apulian roads and observes a fenced-in factory area. Demonstrators chant slogans claiming residency for migrants, while the artist stares at the deserted loading site of the factory. It is only in the closing credits that the spectator is informed about the specifics of the locations of the videos: the refugee registration camps in Bavaria, and the crossroads in Apulia, Italy, where more than a dozen migrant workers harvesting fruit under slave-like conditions died in accidents in 2018.[52] When the exhibition opened, the videos were complemented by a third one focusing on a German refugee ship detained in the Sicilian port of Trapani.[53]

Withholding and releasing information, being present, but only in a masked form, Natascha Sadr Haghighian foregrounds the role of the artist, while her individual identity remains hidden. This draws attention to naming as ascription of identity, meaning and value,[54] and can be read as a critique of the assimilation of artists into "the art world's self-congratulatory critical machinery, which prizes token diversity and performances of tolerance while suppressing any work that fails to respect the unwritten rules of minority play".[55] At the same time the stone-headed figure looking at a Bavarian refugee camp and an Italian crossroads where migrant workers died, addresses the question whether and how onlookers can be moved, drawing attention to the dehumanizing perception of migrant people as faceless others, as well as to the 'Versteinerung' (petrification) taking place within inhospitable 'host' countries. While some reviewers

52 Description of video 1 and 2 adapted from Tobias Timm: Hirn unter Stein.

53 For a first impression see #Ankersentrum #VeniceBiennale #MayYouLiveInInterestingTimes.

54 See Mara Sartore's interview with Franciska Zólyom: "Names not only designate beings and things they also constitute, determine and identify them. By doing so they also distinguish, separate them from each other and ascribe meaning and value to them. [...] it is important to look for alliances, connections and affinities between forms of being. To overcome demarcations and the effects of discrimination that they entail".

55 "Part Diogenes, part MF Doom, Süder Happelmann is a perfect candidate for Biennale disruption, a masked purveyor of slippery pranks that irrigate the usually dry field of institutional critique. Even her lack of a stable CV makes it difficult to assimilate her into the art world's self-congratulatory critical machinery, which prizes token diversity and performances of tolerance while suppressing any work that fails to respect the unwritten rules of minority play. Ben Mauk: We'll Burn Your Pavilions.

criticized 'Ankersentrum' for its lack of ambiguity,[56] others complained about the opacity of the accumulation of politically intended ciphers with particular reference to the naming and masking of the artist.[57] The latter statement, however, seems to confirm the intended effect on the spectator who – despite the clear political message of the installation – is not provided with reassuring answers which would leave the spectatorial position unquestioned.

As stated in the press release, 'Ankersentrum' probes the possibilities of survival, resistance and solidarity[58] in the "ruinous ruin" of the German pavilion through a "somatic experience". This is intensified in the 'DAU Project' by Ilya Khrzhanovsky, which most radically explores the possibilities of translating the past into the present through an immersive experience for the spectators, drawing on the metaphorical and literal walls of the Soviet regime. The 'DAU Project', which opened in Paris in February 2019, has been repeatedly cited as one of the most ambitious art projects of our time setting out to explore notions of freedom and repression, violence and solidarity.[59] It re-visions the world of the Soviet Union between 1938 and 1968 and the life of the Russian Nobel prize winning physicist Lew Landau (1908-1968), who believed in free love, worked on the hydrogen bomb, was repeatedly awarded with the Stalin prize, but also imprisoned.[60] The 'DAU Project' foregrounds the intricate interrelations between culturally and historically situated memories of oppression, war and migration, calling upon Stalinist state-violence connected to the imprisonment in labour camps or deportation of "state enemies" and ethnic minorities, amounting to a forced internal migration of an estimated six million people. At the same time the project encourages global links beyond these historically anchored confines. Originally intended to travel to different metropolitan areas (from Paris to Berlin and London), the project inevitably engages with questions of the translation of histories of oppression into different historical and cultural contexts.

The visitors' immersive journey in the Paris production began with the application for entry visa, followed by an individual guide program based upon the results of an initial questionnaire (ensuring that visitors did not embark on the same route), involving performance scenes as well as talk formats, one-on-one encounters, concerts, and film presentations. The films shown during the event are part of this Gesamtkunstwerk, which had been in the making for a decade. It involved the meticulous reconstruction of the Soviet research institute

56 "Ist das jetzt subversiv? Dafür sind die Botschaften zu eindeutig" (Boris Pofalla: Die Deutschen bauen ein Abschiebegefängnis in Venedig).

57 MDR KULTUR-Kunstredakteur Andreas Höll: "Es ist eine Addition von politisch gemeinten Chiffren, die ziemlich diffus wirkt".

58 "Auf der Suche nach den unsteten Formen und Möglichkeiten von Überleben, Widerstand und Solidarität werden immer wieder auch Ruinen in Beschlag genommen, umgewidmet, umgebaut, bewohnt" (Deutscher Pavillon Pressemitteilung).

59 "Unterstützt wird die Installation von den Berliner Festspielen. Intendant Thomas Oberender zufolge lernt man bei dem Projekt, wie große Utopien in repressive Erfahrungen umschlagen können. Man lerne aber auch Formen von Solidarität, Kreativität, unglaublicher Intelligenz und Aufopferungsbereitschaft. ‚Man lernt, was Geschichte mit dem Einzelnen macht, aber wie auch Einzelne manchmal Geschichte machen', so der Intendant der Berliner Festspiele" (Vladimir Esipov: Berliner Mauer als Kunstprojekt).

60 Landau "glaubte an die freie Liebe, baute mit an der Wasserstoffbombe, erhielt mehrfach den Stalin-Preis, wurde dennoch inhaftiert und wieder freigelassen" (Iris Radisch: Das andere Universum).

in the Ukrainian town of Charkow, in which Landau had worked, where Ilya Khrzhanovsky gathered a community of about 400 people including scientists and artists, to immerse themselves in Landau's world – most of them for a couple of weeks – within an overall period of three years.[61] The outcome of this (only partly scripted) docu-fiction project, in which the present everyday life of all participants was intended to merge with the environment of the past, amounted to 700 hours of video material transformed into thirteen feature films. The film material follows the lives of the participants of the project, who almost all play themselves except for Landau and his wife, into their mundane as well as most intimate moments, recording their immersion into the oppressive and violent world of the institute of the Stalinist past and raising reviewers' concerns about the reality-status of presented scenes of violence and about the intended effect.[62]

DAU film participants willingly submitted to a totalitarian system of total surveillance, which was recreated in the process of filming, and which uncannily resonated with current developments of voluntary submission to surveillance by digital (in particular social) media eroding the boundaries between reality and fiction.[63] Teodor Currentzis who played Lev Landau, pointed out, that "[y]ou are in an environment that you know is a game, but it doesn't work if you are not yourself. [...] I felt very uncomfortable many times".[64] Reviews of the films, some of which were released independently in 2019 and 2020, echoed this ambivalent reaction, emphasizing an "eerie, intimately disturbing"[65] effect, leaving a feeling of unease and uncertainty of how to respond.[66] Currentzis' description of an experience of inhabiting – or rather oscillating between – two worlds, captures precisely the effect of immersion. Alison Landsberg has pointed out that although the experiential mode "bespeaks a widespread popular desire to bring things close",[67] it does not fulfil "[t]he fantasy that one might actually have unmediated access to the past by looking or touching 'authentic' objects [...]".[68] Rather "the affective engagements that draw the viewer in [inevitably are] coupled with other modes that assert the alien nature of the past and the viewer's fundamental difference from it".[69] This is achieved in the 'DAU Project' through a self-referential duplication of the process of immersion, as visitors of the performance venue are confronted with the immersive experience of their cinematic 'doubles'.

The value of such a "presentification"[70] of the past thus centrally depends upon the careful design of the immersive event. Reviewers of the on-site immersive

61 See Joseph Hanimann: Selbstzerstörerisches Totalspektakel.
62 Ibid.: "Sollen diese in allen Einzelheiten nachgebauten sowjetischen Wohnstuben, Funktionärsbüros, Wodkaschenken und Massenschlafsäle mit durchgelegenen Pritschen, die wir durchwandern, uns Angst machen oder irgendwie nostalgisch in vergangenen Zeiten zurückversetzen?".
63 "Soviet citizens, and DAU's participants, submitted to a totalitarian rule with eyes open; today we seem oblivious to it. [...] We live in a transparent world, but we cannot accept it" (DAU's star Teodor Currentzis quoted in Steve Rose: Inside DAU, the 'Stalinist Truman Show').
64 Teodor Currentzis quote in Steve Rose: Inside DAU, the 'Stalinist Truman Show'.
65 Peter Bradshaw: DAU.Natasha review.
66 "Even now I am not sure how to take it" (Peter Bradshaw: DAU. Degeneration Review).
67 Alison Landsberg: Engaging the Past, p. 3.
68 Ibid., p. 7.
69 Ibid., p. 10.
70 See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht: Production of Presence.

event in Paris were predominantly critical of the actual realization of the intended gigantic Gesamtkunstwerk[71] which conjoined an overwhelming abundance of information with disturbing visual material. Expressing their concern about the lack of clarity of the message of this immersive experience, reviewers asked whether the venue was supposed to evoke a nostalgia for the past or a fear of a totalitarian self-destructive system. However, according to the director Ilya Khrzhanovsky this lack of explicit guidance is central for the individual journey of the visitors enabling a process of self-discovery.[72] Nevertheless this process is decisively bound to the cultural and historical context in which the experience takes place. Thus, the example of the 'DAU Project' once again testifies to the importance of "the materiality of a particular site and how it affects" the visitors' journey.[73]

The success of the 'DAU Project' as a warning against the current revival of the belief in totalitarian regimes and as an exploration of the effects of living within walls depends as much upon the multimedia design of the event as on its site-specificity. In Paris the performance took place in and between two opulent theatre buildings of the nineteenth century, the Théâtre du Châtelet and the Théâtre de la Ville, which were then under reconstruction,[74] foregrounding the aesthetic dimension of the event with a focus on the process of the creation of the experience itself. This was criticized as a distraction from the histories of oppression to be called upon, and thus as a prevention of an engagement with potential links to current political developments, catering instead to the narcissistic desires of global consumers who are primarily interested in experiencing themselves in a spectacular event, particularly in potentially one-on-one encounters with celebrities like performance artist Marina Abramovic who participated in the filming and in the performance event.

By contrast, the original plan of the performance venue to open in Berlin in October 2018, which was prevented by city authorities despite the support of the minister of Cultural Affairs Monika Grütters, included the construction of a closed off area in the city center for the four-week duration of the production, surrounded by a wall to be erected overnight like the Berlin Wall in 1961, and to be torn down on the closing night of the production on 9 November 2018. In the German context such a reconstruction of the Berlin Wall as an icon of division could have provided an important link between different historical contexts relating to oppression, war and forced migration from the first half of the twentieth century up to the present and could have made a powerful statement in commemoration of the collapse of the Berlin Wall on the final day of production. In such a context the visitors' immersion in a world of violence and control, collectivism and extremes[75] could have emphasized the necessity of solidarity against

71 "Menschenzoo oder gigantisches Gesamtkunstwerk" (Iris Radisch: Das andere Universum).
72 Iris Radisch quoting from her interview with Ilya Khrzhanovsky: "Nicht auf das Ergebnis komme es an, sondern auf die Reise, auf die man sich begebe. [...] Die UdSSR sei [...] nur ein Spiegel, in dem jeder sich selbst entdecken könne".
73 Susanne Buckley-Zistel: Tracing the politics of aesthetics, p. 782.
74 See Jürgen König: DAU-Projekt in Paris.
75 "[E]ine Welt der Gewalt, der Überwachung, des Kollektivismus und der Extreme" (Iris Radisch: Das andere Universum).

mechanisms of oppression. Beyond the 'DAU Project' the ensuing public debate reflects the scepticism about immersive art as an individualized phenomenon with unpredictable directionality and a concomitant distrust of its potential for the forging of solidarity communities and for activist interventions in current totalitarian politics.

Sadr Haghighian's 'Ankersentrum' and the 'DAU Project' make visible the specific historical contexts of actual and metaphorical walls. 'Ankersentrum' projects the ways in which language walls off – but inadvertently reveals – unwanted truths, and how it interrelates with (moving) image and sound, expressing the belief in the possibility to develop strategies of resistance and to build solidarity. The 'DAU Project' and its use of different media invites an extended immersion into a specific part of Russian history with profound repercussions for world history on the European continent, and resonates with contemporary border fortification and nationalistic politics in different parts of the world. In both venues the focus on the walls surrounding those collaborating with – and profiting from – authoritarian dictatorships or current consumer capitalist societies draws attention to the site-specificity of the reception process and to the implications of immersive experiences.

Conclusion

The projects discussed in this paper engage with a wide range of different forms from the presentation of "authentic" objects and fabrics, to image, sound, video and text, to the creation of a multimedia immersive performance event. The projects attempt to bring close to spectators the life stories of those whose voices are not heard, who are denied individuality and denounced as 'boat people', but also of those who have collaborated with a system of oppression and the repercussions for their lives. In this context the affect of the uncanny intrusion of what seems radically 'other' in public spaces and art venues of metropolitan cities is intended to raise haunting questions about links across geographical and historical divides and about the implication of current global spectators in cosmopolitan areas in these histories.

In all examples the different historical contexts of the exhibition or performance spaces are brought into productive friction with the venues generating an oscillating effect between radical difference and disturbing closeness, albeit with varying intensity, ranging from an emphasis on the foreignness of the exhibit (in 'Barca Nostra') to an invitation to immersion (in 'The DAU Project'). Thus, the spectator's own position as part of affluent consumer societies profiting from the exploitation and exclusion of its 'others' is called upon by laying bare and encouraging the visitors to see the hidden links between the present and the past, between their own and seemingly foreign histories in a call for an ethical response and with the hope for forging a global solidarity community as prerequisite for change.

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"Listen to your tribal voice"

Embodying Locality in German-Australian Music Encounters
The Case of Peter Maffay and Yothu Yindi

In 1998, German rock musician Peter Maffay founded a music project called 'Begegnungen' (encounters) in collaboration with artists from around the globe, including the singers Noa from Israel, Natacha Atlas from Egypt, Lokua Kanza from Congo, American blues musician Sonny Landreth, the rap group Cartel in Turkey, and, what will be the focus of this essay, the Yolngu band Yothu Yindi in Australia. Each of these collaborative 'encounters' consisted of a visit of Peter Maffay and his band to the designated country and the subsequent performance and recording of one song together. These recordings, then promoted under the umbrella 'World music', culminated in several releases in 1998-1999: the release of the album 'Begegnungen', a concert tour around Germany, the release of a film documentation, and the publication of an illustrated travel book.

While each of these encounters focus on tolerance, international solidarity, and transnational exchange (of stories, genre, lyrics, political agendas), it is mainly Peter Maffay, I argue, who engages in a transcultural performance, presenting himself as global body and symbolic contact zone. Especially in the case of the collaboration between Maffay and Yothu Yindi, in their joint tour around Germany and release of the protest song "Tribal Voice", Maffay engages with Aboriginality as a form of ethnic drag and uses the intercultural encounter as a forum for esoteric and exoticized images. While Yothu Yindi's traditions and lifestyle are presented as necessarily tied to a specific locality, Peter Maffay's engagement with ethnicity foregrounds a freely accessible cultural experience ready to be appropriated for a global market.

Both protagonists of the collaboration, Peter Maffay and Yothu Yindi, are known in their home countries for their political activism. In the 50 years of his active career as a musician Peter Maffay has frequently acted as peace activist and agent for numerous aid projects and charity foundations. Maffay considers himself political and also inserts his own political stances into his music.[1] Born in Braşov (then: Kronstadt) in 1949, Romania, as the son of a Transylvanian Saxon mother and Hungarian father, who immigrated to a Bavarian village when he was 14 years old, the fight against discrimination and xenophobia is of personal importance to him: "I commit myself to people who are in need, for minorities, for people who are discriminated against, because I find it atrocious".[2] His work as a peace activist has brought him to perform a concert for German troops in

1 See Olaf Neumann: Umweltschützer Peter Maffay.
2 Peter Maffay quoted in Suzanne Cords; my translation. Original: "Ich engagiere mich für die Leute, für die man sich engagieren sollte. Ich engagiere mich für Minoritäten, für Menschen, die man diskriminiert, weil ich das grauenhaft finde".

Afghanistan in 2005, and he facilitates and donates to projects for traumatized and abused children as part of the Tabaluga foundation. For his social commitment he received the Federal Cross of Merit ('Bundesverdienstkreuz') in 1996 and 2008 as well as the 'World Vision Charity Award' in 2006.[3]

Yothu Yindi's front singer M. Yunupiŋu (1956-2013)[4] was one of the first university-trained Yolngu educators from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, and has been an influential representative of bicultural education within local Indigenous schools. In 1986 he formed the band Yothu Yindi and achieved national recognition since its release of the song "Treaty" in 1991. The band is celebrated for its innovative blend of what Aaron Corn calls "globalized Anglophone rock" and traditional Yolngu 'manikay' (literally meaning 'song'), "a sacred yet public form of ceremonial music from north-east Arnhem Land".[5] At the time of Yunupiŋu's death in 2013, Yothu Yindi had released seven albums of music and sixteen music videos. In 1990, the band established its own philanthropic arm, the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF), which, with Yunupiŋu as its secretary, inaugurated the annual Garma Festival and also produced the motion picture 'Yolngu Boy' (directed by Stephen Johnson, 2000).[6]

In coverage on Yothu Yindi, it is often neglected that the notion of bicultural exchange has been a decisive part of Yothu Yindi's members and background from the start. From its beginnings in 1986, the band was envisaged as a bicultural initiative that has fostered exchange between Australians of disparate backgrounds, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (the latter referred to as 'balanda').[7] Aaron Corn outlines how the band's bicultural outset had its roots in the Yolngu traditional framework 'gaṉma', which Yunupiŋu had developed further as a pedagogical model in his educational work but also applied to his music practice. The theory of this confluence, 'gaṉma', originates in the Yolngu's use of the powerful metaphor in the meeting and mixing of two streams, e.g., freshwater and saltwater currents. "At its core, 'gaṉma' serves as a model for a specific kind of diplomatic accord in Yolngu society", between groups of equal social standing who agree "to share their respective ceremonies and knowledge without attempting to assimilate each other or to claim each other's property as their own".[8] Like the meeting of currents at 'gaṉma' sites such as the one on the Gumatj estate of Biranybirany, it is a "relationship of respectful distance and recognition for the political independence of the other".[9] Corn argues that the values of cooperation and social parity that are integral to Yolngu understandings have been universalized by Yunupiŋu through the globally accessible format of pop-

3 See Suzanne Cords.
4 Yunupiŋu sadly passed away on 2 June 2013, under Yolngu law there is a strict moratorium on the forenames of deceased individuals being spoken for some years. In the following, I will refer to him by mentioning his last name Yunupiŋu.
5 Aaron Corn: Agent of Bicultural Balance, p. 15.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid. The Yolngu trio comprised Yunupingu (lead vocals, rhythm guitar), W. Marika (traditional vocals and dance) and M. Munuŋgurr (yiḏaki or didgeridoo), all of whom had been raised in Arnhem Land on the Methodist mission at Yirrkala. The Balanda trio comprised Stu Kellaway (bass guitar), Cal Williams (lead guitar) and Andy Beletty (drums).
8 Aaron Corn: Agent of Bicultural Balance, p. 24.
9 Ibid.

ular song.[10] Yothu Yindi performed Western rock fused with traditional Aboriginal music and dance. Through its frequent references to ancestral themes and materials (in lyrics, instrumentation and dance), Yothu Yindi's music continually points local audiences back to the ancestral values and practices that underpin Yolngu society and culture. Its resetting of these themes and materials in the rock idiom demonstrates how durable ancestral ideas could be re-invented for younger Yolngu audiences and further to communicate traditional Yolngu ideas across cultures.[11] This compositional approach has since become popularized further by other bands in Arnhem Land such as Saltwater, Nabarlek and Yilila.

In addition, Yothu Yindi's music has demonstrated how the rock idiom could be internationalized and employed to encourage audiences worldwide to engage with Australian politics. Yothu Yindi stood as an icon of the Aboriginal Reconciliation movement in the early post-Mabo period when Australia's legal and political institutions were just starting to recognize past injustices against Indigenous Australians and the continuing native title over the lands they inhabited. According to Yunupiŋu, the continuing aim of this diplomatic effort has been to "make it possible for others to understand" why the Yolngu continue to struggle for formal recognition of their sovereignty in Australia, and why this is crucial both to their very cultural survival and to building a more equitable Australia for all.[12] An important success of Yothu Yindi's bicultural performances has been the renegotiation of cultural contact. As John Castles argues, Aboriginal music before the 1990s was regarded as either 'traditional' or 'contemporary' and a contact between these discourses was denied.[13] In the performance of a group whose members have partially integrated with other music traditions or languages, or when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal musicians perform together, then "a fundamental dislocation has taken place".[14] But clearly, as Castles argues, all Aboriginal musics, let alone Aboriginal adaptations of imported forms such as country, rock, rap or reggae are the product of contact with foreign cultures, forever changed and recontextualized by that contact.[15] It was an accomplishment of Yothu Yindi to break through this habitual separation of discourses.[16] It did, however, also support the labelling of Yothu Yindi in the not at all unproblematic musical category of 'World music'. While the label World music allows entry into Western popular music mainstream and may help to generate global success, the underlying assumptions behind this genre can be limiting. "The agenda is set firmly within a paradigm which sees non-Western musicians struggling to make it in a white mainstream dominated market".[17] Further, the genre World music's ethic of

10 Ibid., p. 39.
11 Aaron Corn: Land, song, constitution, p. 100.
12 Yunupiŋu quoted in ibid.
13 John Castles: Tjungaringanyi, p. 25.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., pp. 25 f.; see Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, pp. 34 f.
16 In an opposing reading, one could also argue that the band's division into two groups, the non-Aboriginal musicians playing standard Western (rhythm) instruments, the guitar, bass and drums, alongside Aboriginal musicians playing the yidaki (didgeridoo) and bilma (clapsticks), not necessarily underscores cross-cultural collaboration and exchange, but reinforces cultural differences.
17 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 23.

interest in the culturally exotic is encapsulated in specific locality and traditions. "International interest in Aboriginal music, like interest in Aboriginal art, gravitates towards the isolated locale; it seeks out artists from communities remote enough to lay claim to authentic lines of tradition. In this sense the 'margin' or the 'minor' is the creative space when opposed to the 'mainstream', or rather it is the deterritorialising movement which is creative".[18] Bands such as Yothu Yindi would feed in with the emerging World music movement and eventually sell their albums in US-America and Europe. The image that was created, as Castles argues, can be summed up in the phrase 'Into the Mainstream' – both in and away from the marginal.[19] The musicians are not acknowledged as individual artists, but "more often than not, seen as representatives of their racial groups", as a basis on which parallels, comparisons and generalizations are made.[20] In World music's attempt to universalize the locally specific, hence exotic, Yothu Yindi's innate cross-cultural influence has been silenced in many commentaries on the band. The assumption is that the cost of such crossover success is often personal, artistic, musical and political compromise.[21] In this regard, the branding of Yothu Yindi as part of popular music reinforced, as Philip Hayward postulates, that the "blackness of Yothu Yindi is carefully managed in their videos and public appearances" as 'authentic' representatives of independent Aboriginal Australia. They are perceived as "located 'somewhere else' safely away from the inner-city – their blackness and Aboriginality does not require (racial) dilution".[22] Claiming that their 'authentic' Aboriginality is their major selling point, this leads, as he argues further, to a repression of their whiteness: "Minimal attention is accorded to the white members of the band, they are carefully 'backgrounded' to the point of near invisibility in videos and interviews".[23] It will be discussed in the following how Peter Maffay's visit to Arnhem Land reproduces such representations of 'authentic' and mono-cultural locality.

Nonetheless, Yothu Yindi's achievement as both performers and cultural ambassadors for the Yolngu people, Aboriginal culture and – in an international context – Australia itself are significant. As Lisa Nicol argues, there is no mandatory responsibility for contemporary Aboriginal music "to make overtly polemic points", thereby limiting their expressive potential.[24] It seems an established expectation to require Aboriginal cultural forms to carry the burden of being politically 'correct' and 'oppositional'.[25] In contrast, especially Yothu Yindi's globally screened music videos played an important role in promoting a diversified and 'positive image' of Indigenous cultures and identities. For example, in the music video to their chart-hit "Treaty", positive images of vitality and presence are conveyed through scenes of young Aboriginal children dancing and playing on the beach. "[T]heir culture is glorified by potent and mesmerising tribal dance

18 John Castles: Tjungaringanyi, p. 26.
19 Ibid.
20 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 24.
21 Ibid., p. 23.
22 Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 37.
23 Ibid.
24 Lisa Nicol quoted in ibid., p. 36.
25 See Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 34.

sequences set in lush bushland with close-ups of painted faces and body parts in motion. [...] With the exception of the footage of [Prime Minister Bob] Hawke and brief, 'flash' inserts of Aboriginal street protests, the entire video was shot on Aboriginal land in Arnhem Land".[26] Nicol concludes that these images capture the uniqueness of Yolngu culture, and, in the process, strengthen and preserve it. Consultation on all aspects of the production process was carried out with elders and there has been a "careful choice of what is *not* shown as well as what *is*".[27] Seeing how music had been a form of black celebration and resistance in the 1980s (such as in the pioneering work of Aboriginal bands such as No Fixed Address, Us Mob and Scrap Metal),[28] the central shift in the performance of Yothu Yindi's songs (especially in music videos) is a lack of overt politics. "Rather than simply representing Aboriginal politics in a simplistic and visually obstrusive way, the *process of production* of the videos is paramount, and its procedures faithful to Yolngu ways and philosophy".[29] In contrast to this positive reading of Yothu Yindi's feel-good performances, Philip Hayward more critically engages with how these images circulate and how these meanings are publicly understood and subsequently represented, in Australia, and in our example, also overseas. Hayward claims, "there is something reassuringly comforting in an Aboriginal band singing in their own tongue amidst dream-holiday-exotic surroundings at a time when international politics is in far greater turmoil".[30] He further states, "overtly political commentary in popular music is seen as a commercial 'turn-off' here, a hindrance to Yothu Yindi's push for broader acceptance". This, of course, becomes problematic, when "it's not signified politics per se that are the problem, it's radical Aboriginal politics that are perceived to grate on mass market sensibilities".[31] It is therefore useful, in the context of Yothu Yindi's collaborations with oversea artists, to recognize the underlying white hegemonic discourses which have created the band's context of reception. Their lack of overt political edge and their different cultural background (marked as 'colourful ethnicity') has rendered them highly 'media friendly' in an environment whose institutions are aware of the political correctness of including occasional representations of Aboriginality in their material.[32] In the following I discuss the friction between Yothu Yindi's own 'softening' of political edge in the context of World music's commercialization agenda, and at the same time international collaborators such as Peter Maffay foregrounding their own political interests and activism by their engagement with Yothu Yindi's Aboriginality.

Yunupiŋu's death in 2013 was widely covered in the European media. Several articles on Yunupiŋu's death, including German, Austrian and Dutch press releases, mention the collaboration with Peter Maffay in the late 1990s. For example, in the newspaper 'Frankfurter Rundschau', the opening sentence reads: "The

26 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 26.
27 Ibid., p. 30 (original emphasis).
28 Bands such as No Fixed Address had already utilized the sounds and instrumentation of Western rock'n'roll, but Yothu Yindi was the first to combine that with ancient song cycles, Aboriginal instrumentation, and dance performances.
29 Lisa Nicol: Culture, Custom and Collaboration, p. 30 (original emphasis).
30 Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 37.
31 Ibid., p. 41.
32 Ibid., p. 39.

singer of the Australian Aboriginal band Yothu Yindi, who once toured through Germany together with Peter Maffay, is dead".[33] Next to the tour with Maffay, the article only mentions Yothu Yindi's performance at the Sydney Olympics closing ceremony as the two major events of their career. This gives an impression of the enduring success this collaborative work seems to have achieved for Maffay in Europe, while in Australia the collaboration between Yothu Yindi and Maffay went largely unnoticed.[34]

In 1998, Peter Maffay and his band were invited to spend ten days in Nhulunbuy, a village in the northeastern part of the Northern Territory, Arnhem Land. During this time they rehearsed and recorded the collaborative song "Tribal Voice", which also culminated in a music video.[35] Maffay and his band were accompanied by cameras, as there were plans for a DVD release of the 'Begegnungen'-documentary in 2005. The song "Tribal Voice" was first released by Yothu Yindi in 1991 as part of the album of the same name. The album 'Tribal Voice' became the first album featuring songs in an Aboriginal Australian language to achieve significant chart success and international multi-platinum sales. Yunupiŋu being awarded as the 1992 Australian of the Year, irrefutably sealed the place of Yothu Yindi in the nation's music history.[36] The song "Tribal Voice" stands as Yothu Yindi's response to the influence of Christianity in Yolngu lifestyles following decades of local administration under state-sanctioned missions.[37] While the song recognizes the world's many faiths, it especially celebrates the continuing centrality of ancestral Yolngu belief and law. "Tribal Voice" was therefore conceived of as a rock anthem for Yolngu religious freedom and cultural survival. The song's chorus alludes to the global diversity of human religions, and echoes the activist expression of 'Get Up, Stand Up'.[38] Yothu Yindi's song therefore promotes a validation and the equality of Indigenous cultures, languages, law and religion, alongside other cultures and traditions.

While it is unspecified why this particular song was chosen to be re-recorded as the collaborative song with the German visitors, there are hints at how Maffay and his team read the meanings of this song. In the illustrated travel book, 'Peter Maffay's Begegnungen' by Michael Rieth, released parallel to the album and tour in 1998, the Aboriginal people living at Nhulunbuy are described as alcoholics, "uprooted, who haven't found (yet?) their way back" to the tribal voice. They are contrasted to Yunupiŋu and his family who live in "one of the last paradises", Binanangay, in accordance with Yolngu traditions. They have, according to the travel book, "returned to a way of life that is older than anything that has

33 Frankfurter Rundschau: Sänger der Aborigines-Band Yothu Yindi gestorben (my translation). Original: "Der Sänger der australischen Aborigines-Band Yothu Yindi, die einst mit Peter Maffay auch durch Deutschland tourte, ist tot".

34 In all Australian articles on Yothu Yindi I have worked with so far there is only one brief mentioning of the 'Encounters' tour in Germany in a chronological timeline of the band's work.

35 See "Tribal Voice": Peter Maffay, Mandawuy Yunupingu.

36 Aaron Corn: Agent of Bicultural Balance, p. 18.

37 Aaron Corn: Land, song, constitution, p. 87. See also idem.: Reflections and Voices, p. 82.

38 Lyrics chorus: "All the people | In the world are dreaming (get up, stand up)/Some of us cry, cry, cry | For the rights of survival now (get up, stand up)/While others don't give a damn | They're all waiting for a perfect day | You'd better get up and fight for your rights | Don't be afraid of the move you make | You'd better listen to your tribal voice".

been developed in Europe", they are 'one with nature' in an experience of "One Blood".[39] This clear favouring and essentializing generalization of a traditional and rural Aboriginal way of life, in contrast to an urbanized Aboriginality that is here associated with drug abuse and precariousness, is reinforced by the choice of photographs. There are two distinct ways of visual representation in the chapter on Arnhem Land. Firstly, there are documentary-style black and white photographs of the local Yolngu people in Nhulunbuy, showing impoverished houses, a man drinking from a can of beer and rubbish lying around. These photographs have a very matter-of-fact atmosphere, the angle is from above, with an observing and distant perspective. In one of these pictures Peter Maffay is included, he looks worried and is presented in a pose of listening. In contrast to these photographs, there are other, more colourful depictions of Aboriginal life in remote Binanangay. In ethnographic fashion, there are panorama shots of the blue sea and large trees, as well as close-ups of didgeridoos, guitars, and tribal marks on faces. In many of these shots Maffay is presented next to Yunupiŋu, walking along the beach, sitting by the bonfire, or joining him in song. In the text of the travel book it is stated how Maffay and his band experience this journey as a 'going back to the roots', and that Maffay hopes for those Aboriginal people lost to alcoholism to find back to their roots as well. The term 'paradise' is stated several times. Maffay romanticizes this spiritual experience of connecting with the land, of "being instead of thinking",[40] and the photographs of him blending in with the landscape emphasize this connection he gains with himself and this particular locality. These photographs favour life as primordial and 'authentically' nature-bound, a state that, according to the claims made about the urban Aboriginal people and about Maffay himself, can be "returned" to, however difficult because of the "destructive forces of civilization".[41] Yunupiŋu and Yothu Yindi are staged as indelibly linked to this particular landscape, in agreement with Hayward who argues that "the Aboriginal rock bands were effectively rendered *part* of the landscape, as organic cultural outcrops".[42] The safe, picturesque 'exoticness' displayed in these representations limits the political agenda of this collaboration to one where the European visitor understands and problematizes his own (and other's) lack of boundedness to nature. This is further supported by the music video to "Tribal Voice" where Peter Maffay begins his solo in the second verse, singing "Well inside my mind there's a tribal voice | And it's speaking to me ev'ryday | And all I have to do is to make a choice | 'Cause I know there is no other way".[43] Maffay, quite literally, performs his own 'returning to roots' as a choice.

The notion of "one blood", repeated several times in the travel book as well as in the film documentary, foregrounding Aboriginal purity and boundedness to a specific locality, is further demonstrated by the assertion that Peter Maffay and band were the only non-Aboriginal people on site. In the biography 'Maffay. Auf

39 Michael Rieth: Peter Maffay's Begegnungen, pp. 8-22 (my translations).
40 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir, p. 274.
41 Ibid., p. 8.
42 Philip Hayward: Safe, Exotic and Somewhere Else, p. 40 (my emphasis).
43 "Tribal Voice".

dem Weg zu mir', author Edmund Hartsch claims that "there were no white people and without a written authorization there were none allowed in the camp".[44] Maffay is further quoted in the documentary 'Begegnungen', saying that "it was the first time, that they have received guests here".[45] The film documentary itself disproves this claim as there are various other non-Aboriginal people, including the band members of Yothu Yindi, shown to reside there. There is, therefore, an attempt to position Maffay as exceptional in a landscape and culture regarded as closed and isolated, which clearly contrasts Yunupiŋu's framework of 'ga̱nma', the Yolngu bicultural practice of sharing cultures. As this encounter is not covered in any Australian sources, it is difficult to capture the other side, what did Yunupiŋu and his family make of this group visiting them, filming them, taking pictures of them. There is only one short comment in the film documentary by Yunupiŋu, asked about the meaning behind this encounter: "Why not".[46] It is evidently an encounter initiated by the German partners in which the hospitality of Yunupiŋu and the camp is instrumentalized as the site of Peter Maffay's personal reflection and journey. This is climaxed in Peter Maffay being adopted by Yunupiŋu in a Yolngu ceremony: "He has made me part of his family", Maffay remembers in his autobiography 'Der neunte Ton' (2013).[47] His new Yolngu name is 'Baykantjarry', meaning 'Fire', which is vividly illustrated by photographs of him, in tribal marks, sitting by the fireplace.[48] Peter Maffay's *embodiment* of Yolngu lifestyle and nature during the ten-day trip to Arnhem Land is captured in the illustrated travel book and documentary as both a development in appearance, and as a change of attitude. The travel book mentions that the guitars they are playing with are out of tune, however, as Maffay muses, this does not seem to matter anymore. He is drawn in by the natural rhythms and magically joins in the songs.[49] In several photographs he is pictured with tribal marks on his face, which he also wears during the 'Encounters' tour around Germany.

The representation of Maffay's journey, from naïve rock musician to well-informed and acknowledged Yolngu associate, and the subsequent "masquerading" in tribal marks later on tour, can be contextualized as a known practice of performing culture or performing 'race' in Germany. In her study 'Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation and Sexuality in West Germany', published 2002, Katrin Sieg theorizes ethnic drag as a normative practice in which Germans have engaged with, disavowed, and contested 'race' in the pre- and post-World War 2 period. Her definition of ethnic drag includes not only cross-racial casting on the theatre stage, but, more generally, the performance of 'race' as a masquerade. Sieg's examples include ethnic impersonations in Jew Farces of the 1930s, to reenactments of Native Americans in the various adaptations of Karl May's 'Winnetou' westerns perennially staged at Bad Segeberg's summer festival since

44 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir, p. 274 (my translation). Original: "Dort gab es keine Weißen und ohne eine schriftliche Genehmigung auch keinen Zutritt".
45 Quoted in ibid. (my translation): "Es war das erste Mal, dass sie hier Gäste empfingen".
46 Peter Maffay: Begegnungen, TC: 00:14:40.
47 Peter Maffay: Der neunte Ton, p. 66 (my translation). Original: "Er hat mich zu einem Teil seiner Familie gemacht".
48 Michael Rieth: Peter Maffay's Begegnungen, p. 28.
49 Ibid., p. 10.

1952. As a crossing of racial lines in performance, ethnic drag simultaneously erases and redraws boundaries as ancient and immutable, and can be read positively according to Sieg. As a symbolic contact zone between German bodies and other cultures, ethnic drag facilitates the exercise and exchange of power. And as a simulacrum of 'race', it challenges the perceptions and privileges of those who would mistake appearances for essence.[50] As a technique of estrangement, drag denounces that which dominant ideology presents as natural, normal, and inescapable, without always offering another truth. Yet the conclusion that ethnic drag always resists or subverts the limitations of biological concepts of 'race' is countered by historical evidence (such as the fact that Nazi ideology had inherited a long stage tradition of racial masquerade and deployed it as part of its propaganda efforts). Indeed, ethnic masquerade as a "technology of forgetting" of the post-war period,[51] has been an important theatrical trope through which Germans have imagined and expressed their difference from other, supposedly inferior nationalities, but simultaneously evoked and displaced the historical matter in question.[52] With this particularly German tradition of ethnic drag in mind, the cross-cultural performance of Peter Maffay in the photographs and later on stage together with Yothu Yindi, can be perceived as an ethnic masquerade. In contrast to the Yolngu practice of 'ga̱nma' between groups of equals agreeing to share their respective ceremonies and knowledge without attempting to assimilate each other, Maffay's performance appropriates an 'authentic', exotic Aboriginiality, thereby embodying cultural differences and 'otherness' of an ancient, 'lost' primordial culture. When Maffay was adopted in ceremony by Yunupiŋu he acknowledged this adoption as an honour and gift, but simultaneously regards this practice as an obligation for the Aboriginal side. Yunupiŋu was thereby, according to Maffay, "bridging the gap beyond music".[53] Encouraged by the journeys in 1998, he created a second 'Begegnungen' album in 2006.[54] This time with a focus on children's aid, visiting Cape Verde, South Africa, India and South Korea. In the United States he visited a Lakota Reservation, where he helped to build a school. In honour of his commitment he was, yet again, adopted by an Indigenous tribe.[55] Peter Maffay regards his own ethnic performance as a way to overcome cultural differences, yet in its multiple reiterations and various 'costume changes', remains without any sustainable outcome.

One particularly harsh critic of the 'Encounters' tour in Germany, 1998-1999, specifically thematized the performance of ethnicity: "At the beginning of the show he looks rather sickly, the Maffay-Peter. Red and white dots on his face

50 Katrin Sieg: Ethnic Drag, pp. 2 f.
51 Ibid., pp. 84 f.
52 Ibid., p. 11. For example, the traditions of Jewish impersonation, whose emergence theatre scholars locate around 1800, illustrate the longevity and pervasiveness of racial impersonation on the German stage, often in the service of ethnic segregation, social exclusion, and cultural hierarchy.
53 Peter Maffay: Der neunte Ton, p. 66 (my translation). Original: "In Australien wurde ich von M. adoptiert. Er hat mich zu einem Teil seiner Familie gemacht, eine der höchsten Auszeichnungen, die einem dort zuteilwerden kann. M. [...] hat damit einen Brückenschlag geschaffen, der weit über die Musik hinausgeht. Für ihn war es eine Verpflichtung, für mich ein Geschenk."
54 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay. Auf dem Weg zu mir, p. 343.
55 Ibid., p. 354.

remind of severe pimples who got out of control. But don't worry, it's only makeup. The rock star from Lake Starnberg has painted a few colourful Aboriginal marks on his face for that purpose. Only corrections on the surface, like the cooing didgeridoo-sounds and exotic percussions, but at its core the same mainstream-grout as for the past 20 years. Every continent has been payed attention to dutifully [...] unbelievably corny".[56] This critic emphasizes that this musical performance does not present actual Aboriginal culture (as Yothu Yindi is not mentioned at all in this review), but it comments on Peter Maffay in drag, performing a different culture, *which* one is rather negligible – as all continents are worked through anyway. Further, stressing the fact that he is a rock star from Lake Starnberg, also known as Prince's Lake and known for wealthy vacation homeowners, underscores Maffay's distance from the precarious places he intends to showcase and support with his project. In response to the critical voices against the 'Encounters' project, Maffay has justified the collaborations as "fusion" of cultures and as a way to address racism and xenophobia. Disillusioned by the outcome of the tour, he, however, oddly concludes that the project was only liked and understood by those "more or less intelligent".[57] One can thus question the benefit and intention of such a transcultural encounter. There have been no long-lasting results in the collaboration between the two bands, which Maffay regrets: "This was no playing around. This was meant seriously. A very friendly gesture. The only thing I regret is that this solidarity was lost over the years. Also due to the great distance".[58]

It can be said that this transnational encounter did not engender any sustainable connections or political attention. In Peter Maffay's appropriation of Aboriginality as a forum for esoteric and exoticized images of colourful 'authentic' ethnicity, readily available for those invited and previously unexperienced with Aboriginal ways of life, the specific locality of Arnhem Land becomes a mere backdrop for a European ethnic performance. In accordance with the common dilemma of World music's agenda to gravitate towards the culturally exotic and locally specific, yet silencing its overtly political edge in the attempt to universalize the performance, the 'Begegnungen' collaboration has drifted into a 'feel-good', non-confrontational mainstream.

Various mediums and genres of self-representation illustrating this encounter were considered in this essay, including music videos, an illustrated travel book, a film documentary and (auto)biographies. In conclusion, those texts represent a set of elaborated representations of particular aspects of Aboriginality

56 Thomas Keller, Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 12 November 1998, quoted in Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 293 (my translation). Original: "Am Anfang der Show sieht er etwas kränklich aus, der Maffay-Peter. Rot-weiße Punkte auf seinem Gesicht erinnern an schlimme, aus dem Ruder gelaufene Mitesser. Aber keine Sorge, es ist nur Schminke. Und zu diesem Zweck hat sich der Rockstar vom Starnberger See ein paar Aboriginal-Farbtupfer ins Antlitz gemalt. Korrekturen an der Oberfläche, etwas gurgelnde Didgeridoo-Klänge und exotische Percussions, im Kern aber die gleiche Mainstream-Grütze wie seit 20 Jahren. Jeder Kontinent wird brav abgearbeitet. [...] unglaublich abgeschmackt".

57 Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 291.

58 Maffay quoted in Edmund Hartsch: Maffay, p. 275 (my translation). Original: "Das war keine Spielerei. Das war ernst gemeint gewesen. Eine sehr freundliche Geste. Das Einzige, was ich bedaure, ist, dass dieser Zusammenhalt, den ich mir wünschen würde, einfach verloren gegangen ist. Auch wegen der großen Entfernung".

mediated through a succession of white cultural perceptions. These representations address, by using the intercultural encounter as a personal, yet necessarily shared and universalized experience, a dominant culture's representation and mediation of its 'other'. However problematic these representations are, in the context of Germany's mostly unchallenged practice of ethnic drag until the 1990s and Yothu Yindi's limited political overtness in the mainstream World music market, this seems a little less surprising than at first sight. In the long run, it did enable Peter Maffay to develop a new international and politically informed image and to benefit from the Aboriginal band's popularity and acclaim, while this collaboration presented a singular event for Yothu Yindi. This encounter therefore presents a compelling example of the exploitative pitfalls in the context of international solidarity.

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Epilogue

Ambitious was the project which our predecessors had envisaged: to publish a bilingual medium of academic discussion in the field of Australian Studies. The journal's history started in 1986 in the form of a rather informal newsletter tailored at readers generally interested in Australia. One of the central aims of the 'Newsletter' was to present information about conferences as well as general publications about Australia, hence to foster Australian Studies in the German-speaking countries. Gerhard Leitner and Adi Wimmer succeeded in overcoming the difficulties of the first years: the newsletters became more academic and started to include fully peer-reviewed articles in both German and English language. To better reflect these changes in scope and target, the 'Newsletter' was eventually renamed as 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien' in 2006. A new layout and the entry into the MLA International Bibliography as well as AustLit were important steps on this way to professionalism. Diverse and complex as Australian Studies was the variety of topics covered by the articles in the new journal.

We inherited the editorship of the 'Zeitschrift für Australienstudien' in 2012 and continued the initial ambitions of creating a bilingual medium, while also reaching out – more offensively – to our international readers. Inviting more Australian academics – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to the editorial board as well as actively promoting the submission from Australia were one of our major concerns to further establish the journal in the international academic community. In 2014, as a logical consequence, we pushed forward the idea of renaming the journal as 'Australian Studies Journal – Zeitschrift für Australienstudien'.

Together the team of the 'Australian Studies Journal' built a cultural bridge between Europe and Australia – not without using research and teaching as keystones of constructing a vivid discourse across disciplinary borders. Sometimes it helped to break ideological confinements and to ease structural guidelines. The result which we see is remarkable: An innovative and open-minded platform of intellectual exchange has been created across disciplines and different academic cultures.

After nearly ten years of editorial work it is now time to say good bye. We have encountered hundreds of texts, re-read them, commented on them, sent them to referees and back to authors, edited them, all of which left us with a bulk of correspondence. Between 2012 and 2021, we sent 2,559 internal emails to each other. Most were 'official', clarifying, dissenting, approving, always carried by enthusiasm, joy, respect and human warmth. Some were 'private' – from mere Christmas wishes to outright emotional support. They reflect the strong bond that has evolved and blossomed through all the years of mutual work.

For all the positive aspects, we must acknowledge that – although we started with enthusiasm – it needs more than a handful of good ideas to keep alive an academic journal. It requires a lot of staying power and permanent support

from others in order to establish a network of creative and literate writers who are willing to contribute their share of help, to bring forward fresh ideas and to launch scholarly discussions. Thanks for all constructive help. Editors need this spark of inspiration; brainstorming is the source of intellectual exchange and no editor can publish without a push from outside. Our pandemic era may show that social isolation will never be a splendid one. This perception is necessary to extend our intellectual horizon. It may trigger other forms of editorial work, while the retiring team looks back on a very successful period of close cooperation. In retrospect, the outgoing editorial staff is very lucky to note that we have worked perfectly together over the years. Although we faced funding as the main organisational problem, the completion of an intelligent and ingenious new issue every year became the key issue of our efforts. And we never lost hope. It was a real pleasure to be part of this joint venture which brought together colleagues and will leave behind an enduring friendship between the two of us.

What else can we learn? Trust in the future and its challenges!

Oliver Haag & Henriette von Holleuffer (January 2022)

The Editors

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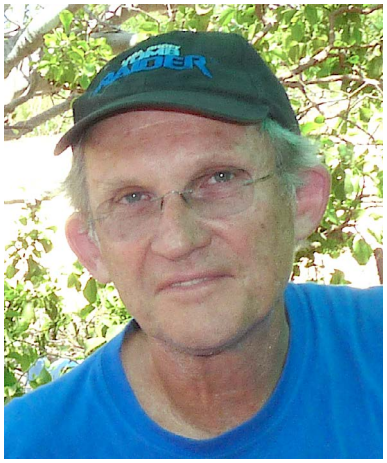
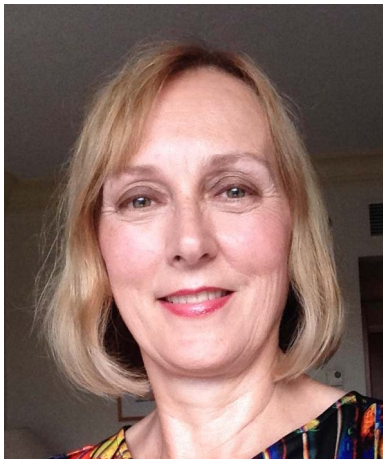


Stephen Muecke is Emeritus Professor at the University of New South Wales, an Adjunct Professor at Notre Dame University (Broome), and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Recent books are 'Latour and the Humanities', edited with Rita Felski (2020) and 'The Children's Country: Creation of a Goolarabooloo Future in North-West Australia', co-authored with Paddy Roe (2020). He is the translator of works by Roland Barthes, Luce Irigaray, Gilles Deleuze, Vinciane Despret, Bruno Latour, Tobie Nathan and Isabelle Stengers. His most recent book is a translation of Vinciane Despret: 'Our Grateful Dead: Stories of Those Left Behind' (2021).



Beate Neumeier is Professor Emerita of English, co-director of the 'Centre for Australian Studies' (CAS) at the University of Cologne (2017-) and co-coordinator of a network of German universities developing an interdisciplinary online teaching platform in Australian Studies (2015-). She is also president of the 'German Association of Australian Studies' (GASt). Her research interests are gender studies, postcolonial and diaspora studies, anglophone drama and performance studies. Publications include 'Gothic Renaissance' (with Elisabeth Bronfen, 2013), 'Decolonizing the Landscape: Indigenous Cultures in Australia' (with Kay Schaffer, 2014), 'Nature and Environment in Australia' (with Boris Braun and Victoria Herche, 2018), 'Ecocritical Concerns and the Australian Continent' (with Helen Tiffin, 2019) and 'Migrant Australia: From Botany Bay to Manus Island' (with Katrin Althans and David Kern, 2022).

Sidonie Smith is the Lorna G. Goodison Distinguished University Professor Emerita of English and Women's Studies, University of Michigan, and Past President of the Modern Language Association of America (2010). She authored over seventy essays and six monographs: 'Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography' (1974), 'A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation' (1987), 'Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century' (1993), 'Moving Lives: Women's Twentieth Century Travel Narratives' (2001), and 'Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times' (2015). With Kay Schaffer, she co-authored 'Human Rights and Narrated Lives' (2004). With Julia Watson, she co-authored 'Reading Autobiography: A Guide to Interpreting Life Narratives' (2010 second expanded edition) and 'Life Writing in the Long Run: A Smith & Watson Autobiography Studies Reader' (2017); and co-edited four volumes of critical essays.

Xianlin Song is an Associate Professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Western Australia. Her recent books include 'Governing Asian International Mobility in Australia' (co-authored with Greg McCarthy, 2020), 'Everything Changes: Australian Writers and China' (co-edited with Nicholas Jose, 2019), 'Transcultural Encounters in Knowledge Production and Consumption' (co-edited with Youzhong Sun, 2018), 'Women Writers in Post Socialist China' (co-authored with Kay Schaffer, 2014), and 'Bridging Transcultural Divides: Teaching Asian Languages and Cultures in a Globalising Academy' (co-edited with Kate Cadman, 2012).

Special Issue in Memory of Kay Schaffer