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FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
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Refugees in Europe: A Long History of Representation

May 12

14h00 Opening Remarks

14h30-16h

Panel 1: Representation and Discourses of Victimhood

Chair: Sabine Hake (FRIAS & The University of Texas at Austin)

Speaker 1: Lorraine Bluche (Miera I Bluche, Berlin)

"Refugee Representations in German History Museums"

How history museums represent refugees is closely linked to the role of museums as institutions of representation in general. Museums shape historical narratives, interpreting and displaying them for a larger public. In this regard, museums can be places of inclusion or exclusion for different groups in society, for instance refugees.

Until the late 1990s the history of migrants in general and of refugees in particular has been nearly completely ignored in German history museums on national, regional and local levels. This corresponded with the political discourse claiming that Germany was not an immigration country. Exceptions were made only for the ethnic German refugees and expellees after World War II. Their history was part of the dominant national narrative: In an ethno-national perspective they were seen as part of the nation and rather perceived as repatriates than as migrants. Meanwhile a shift in discourse and practice has taken place, in the political as well as in the museological field. Migration is a topic present in more and more German museums on different levels and in different ways.

Based on different projects I was involved in at *Deutsches Historisches Museum*, *Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum* and *Friedland Museum*, I will explore the challenges of refugee representations in different history museums. Following the idea of an "Including Museum," as Frauke Miera and I conceive it in the frame of our work as curators (Miera I Bluche), I assume that museums should not only enlighten and entertain their public but also have a social responsibility. In this spirit I will discuss what forms of representation could fight stereotypes, wake empathy for refugees and at the same time empower them. I will highlight participation, multiperspectivity, migration mainstreaming and the global



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community as key concepts and warn against anonymization, victimisation, reduction and 'othering' of refugees as pitfalls to avoid.

Speaker 2: Ipek A. Celik Rappas (Koç University)

"The Director as Humanitarian Activist: Representing Refugees in European Screens"

This paper explores the representation of refugees in contemporary European cinema, including films produced in Europe by non-European directors. The filmic visibility of refugees, similar to mass media representations, is frequently inflected by concerns of humanitarian crises, and directors take or are given the role of humanitarian activists. Refugees are portrayed as the victims of human trafficking in border spaces or of exploitation as undocumented workers in the destination countries. The filmic representations of refugees in Europe often emphasize bodily suffering, suffocation, and voicelessness, tropes that resonate with the contemporary regime of asylum in Europe. Anthropologist Didier Fassin, in his work on the post-1990s treatment of refugees in France argues that while in the 1970s a refugee's narrative of trauma was taken into account as evidence in courts for asylum applications, currently the evidence of abuse has to be corporeal. The asylum-applicant refugee needs to show a wound to make his pain believable. The wound is proof of how full life with social value turns into bare life with no value other than its mere existence. This paper suggests that victimized refugee bodies in films similarly attempt to show bodily wound to appeal for the humanitarian conscience of their spectators. Such appeal to humanitarianism will be analyzed in films such as Jacques Audiard's *Dheepan* (2015), Phillip Lioret's *Welcome* (2009), Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006), and Michael Winterbottom's *In This World* (2002).

Speaker 3: Ivan Lupić (Stanford University)

"The Renaissance and the Refugee"

I see the figure of the refugee as at once too close and too distant. Too close, because I used to be one, in the 1990s Bosnia; too distant, because refugee experience essentially eludes representation and refuses to be generalized. When refugees are represented in language, that language is regularly permeated by other, well-established discourses, particularly those of exile and victimhood. Although victims, refugees are far from being passive. Their movement forward, their determination, their vision all bespeak a faith in life and a devotion to action. The refugee is always a figure for the future. While drawing on



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examples from the Renaissance past, my talk will consider the refugee as an enterprising, assertive, world-changing agent of the future.

16h-17h Coffee break

17h00-18h30

Keynote Speech

Chair: Benoît Dillet (FRIAS, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Speaker: Rada Boric (Centre for Women's Studies, Zagreb)

"Gendered Bodies That Matter: Deconstructing Narratives of Victimhood"

18h30-19h30 Opening Reception

May 13

9h00-9h20 Coffee

9h20 10h30

Panel 2: Exile Studies in the *longue durée*

Chair: Fiona Pfeiffer (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Speaker 1: Matthias Asche (Universität Tübingen)

Master Narratives of Flight and Expulsion: Huguenot and Waldensian Legends from the 17th Century until Today

The long period of persecution of Huguenots in France and of Waldenses in the Duchy of Savoy led on the one hand to strengthen the group cohesion of the refugees, while on the other hand it caused a clear feeling of distinction among them. Drawing on the existential experience of personal insecurity, the religious ties were regarded as the only guarantee for certainty and safety. The remarkable stability of the confessional immigrant community can be explained by a special theology of exile: The typical dogmatic elements of Calvinism (praedestinatio duplex, resistance doctrine) were accompanied by self-attributions in



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sermons and writings that were especially taken from the imagery of the Old Testament (e.g. "chosen people", "boat of God in thunderous storm", "light in the darkness"). Because the earthly life was conceived as a series of forced migration ("peregrinatio") and expulsions ("exodus"), the Huguenots and Waldenses interpreted the safe arrival in their new home as the fulfillment of the promise of their special covenant with God. Both the theology of exile and the socio-cultural practices of everyday culture in exile ensured a social and emotional stability of the immigrant community. Furthermore, the repeatedly celebrated consciousness as migrants and strangers also formed a distinct collective memory among the descendants. The recent tradition of historiography of the Huguenots and Waldenses has traced central secular group identities, which derived from these original biblical-religious motives, including the self-consciousness as elite in missioning and pioneering, in economic success (Max Weber's thesis) and cosmopolitanism.

Speaker 2: Kristina Schulz (Universität Bern)

"Wiedergutmachung as raison d'être: Exile Studies in the German Speaking World"

Focussing on the developments in the Federal Republic, the paper deals with three aspects linked to 'Exilforschung' (Exile Studies) in the German speaking world: (1) the genesis and development of the field from the early post war years on, (2) its approaches and achievements, and (3) its perspectives in the light of new challenges.

It argues that the course of Exilforschung in the German speaking world is closely linked to the experience of National Socialism and its artistic expression. Its raison d'être has been from the beginning on to commemorate the victims of political and racial persecution, especially the (male) representatives of the so called Weimar culture, scattered throughout the globe from 1933 on. The narrow interpretation of exile allows, at least in the abstract, for the idea of a complete reconstruction of the life and work of German intellectuals. The approach combines biographical, literary and historical methods and restores the movement of people and ideas between countries and continents. It has successfully materialized in important biographical handbooks, reference works and individual literary case studies.

At the same time the narrow conceptualization of exile as a German experience (of outstanding men) prevented a fruitful exchange of concepts and methods with emerging neighbour disciplines, such as (Im)migration and Refugee Studies, Judaism and Holocaust Studies, or Migration History. Further more, the idea of exile as the temporary absence of



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'great men' from their home country became criticised by explorers of the life of ordinary people and women's historians in the 1980s.

It is against this backdrop that we have to understand the "crisis" and reconceptualization of Exilforschung in the past two decades. The field is challenged by new forms of (mass) migration and its historical, literary and artistic reappraisal as well as by new conceptualizations of the experience of migration and displacement, linked, for instance, to post-colonialism. The paper argues that, by reconceptualising exile not as a German but as a human experience, Exilforschung is, as by its interdisciplinary approach and its transnational orientation, in the position to contribute to a better understanding of past and present individual experiences of (forced) migration.

10h45-12h15

Panel 3: Printed Traces from Passports to Magazines

Chair: Andreas Gelz (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Speaker 1: Burcu Dogramaci (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

"Refugees' Passports: An Art History of Flight, Representation and Forgery"

In her art project *Ausweisen* (2000), the Berlin artist Chus Lopez Vidal reflects on the power of identity papers which may play a decisive role in people's status: equipped with the "right" passports their owners can easily cross borders and reside in various places around the world. "A man without a passport is a corpse on vacation," says Erich Maria Remarque in his 1941 novel "Liebe Deinen Nächsten" ("Flotsam") in which he describes the fate of three refugees who, without identity documents, could find no refuge in any European country. In many cases, one thing that can be decisive in whether one is granted political asylum is, apart from the reasons one had for fleeing the land, the country of origin itself. That is why organized passport forgery is an essential part of flight designs both historically and at present. Thus, migration patterns are an important matrix when one reflects on fake identities. This is shown in the artistic productions of the past years which repeatedly deal with the subject. The connection between forgery and escape is not an invention of our time. A look back in history reveals that as early as in the period of National Socialism people dealt with forged passports to enable escape to the persecuted. The lecture will focus firstly on the passport in the context of historical cases of flight into exile and reflect on political meanings as (pictorial) representations of the ego. The passport is an official



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identity card and its purpose is the detection of identity based on physiognomic characteristics, place and date of birth, name, gender and home address. Moreover, the passport is a document that states the holder's citizenship, allows the travel movement from one sovereign state to another as well as the return to their own territory. In the second part the fake passport is presented as an important device of the flight, and finally artistic projects that deal with ID documents and identification will be discussed.

Speaker 2: Julia Elsky (FRIAS & Loyola University Chicago)

"Carrefour Marseilles: Jean Malaquais' Refugee Writing under the Occupation"

In this talk, I explore the role of speech accents and official papers in Jean Malaquais' (1908, Warsaw–1998, Geneva) representation of refugees in wartime France in his novel *Planète sans visa* (*Planet without a Visa*). By comparing different manuscript versions of the novel, I trace how Malaquais incorporates refugees' accents into the performative mode of the visa request, of standing in line waiting for different stamps and signatures, of presenting one's "case." Malaquais wrote this panorama of European refugees trying to leave France for the Americas through Marseille as he himself was preparing to move from Marseille to Mexico, fleeing his fate as a Jewish, stateless, Marxist writer. He depicts the places he himself frequented: the Maldoror candy cooperative run by intellectuals trying to get out and who actually had commercial success in the city, the Emergency Rescue Committee's office led by Varian Fry (who helped Malaquais escape), consulates, police stations, and cafes full of émigrés waiting for visas to come through. I study how Malaquais writes accent as central to the experience of statelessness. In turn the act of seeking refuge becomes a game of the fates, and his descriptions of passports and visas not unlike the Surrealist *Jeu de Marseille* tarot cards being drawn up by refugee intellectuals in Varian Fry's circle. Malaquais re-appropriates the mocked Eastern European accent of the anti-Semitic press to show that language and speech reveal the chance and coincidences of identity behind the passports and visas.

Speaker 3: Sandrine Sanos (Texas A & M University - Corpus Christi)

"Post-Holocaust Representations of Displacement: The Algerian War, Refugees, and Gender in France, 1957-1963"

At the end of 1962, almost six months after the Evian Accords had been signed, bringing the Algerian War of Independence to an end, little-known Polish-Jewish novelist, Anna



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Langfus, was awarded the prestigious Goncourt prize for her second novel, *Les Bagages de Sable*. The novel told the story of a young woman who had survived World War Two and its horrors only to live as a displaced orphan in postwar France. The novel and its author may have been an anomaly to the French public. Her story of survival and displacement was less so to those French Jews who were assiduous readers of the glossy monthly magazine *L'Arche*, which been created in 1957 under the aegis of the Fonds Social Juif Unifié. The magazine offered coverage of Jewish political, social, and cultural affairs in France and in the world. Strikingly, it had prominently featured articles about exiled authors writing about the Holocaust, of which Anna Langfus was one, alongside Elie Wiesel and Piotr Rawicz. Langfus, however, was both an author championed in the pages of *L'Arche* and one of its contributors. At the same time, beginning in 1960, *L'Arche* started reporting extensively on the question of "our refugees," namely Jews living in Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, and calling for greater understanding especially of the plight of Algerian Jews who, the magazine chronicled, were being "forced to leave colonial Algeria" for metropolitan France. Amidst these reports, *L'Arche* focused especially on the plight of North African Jewish woman. This paper examines the ways in which a particular (gendered) representation of refugees emerged in those years and how that figure blended the emerging "memory" of Holocaust experience with that of decolonization in order to forge a particular French Jewish identity. It allows us to see how the figure of the "refugee" was shaped by competing political contexts that illuminated as much as they obscured the manner in which global and colonial wars and their aftereffects called into question the way community and citizenship was reimagined in Cold War Europe.

12h15-13h45 Lunch (registration required)

13h45-15h00

Panel 4: Exile and Empathy

Chair: Inga Schwarz (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg)

Speaker 1: Marcos Eymar (Université d'Orléans)

"Massive Loneliness: Community and Individual in the Literary Representation of Spanish Republican Refugees in France"

Political mass migrations present a paradox: whereas migrants are perceived as a single, homogenous and menacing unity by countries which receive them, refugees, on the



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contrary, feel deeply isolated, uprooted from their nation and from any form of “imagined community.” My contribution will explore this contradiction focusing on an episode of twentieth century History which shares many common aspects with the current migratory crisis in Europe: la *Retirada*, or the massive withdrawal that followed the fall of Barcelona to Franquist troops 26 January 1939. In a few weeks an estimated 500.000 refugees crossed the Spanish border into France and were confined in huge internment camps such as Argelès-sur-Mer or Saint-Cyprien where they tried to survive in terrible conditions. The comparison between some articles of the French press of the time and a few literary testimonies by writers such as Max Aub, Manuel Altolaguirre, Celso Amieva or Luis Suárez show the gap between the exterior perspective of the exodus and the alienating ordeal of those who were part of it. Both viewpoints represent two major experiences of the contemporary subject: the former acknowledges the fascination and fear of the mass, as elaborated by thinkers like Ortega y Gasset and Elías Canetti; the latter, the existential disarray of the individual deprived of any form of religious, social and symbolic backup. Under these circumstances, literature becomes a privileged means to try to overcome such a deep divergence and to reveal the universal experience of human loneliness under the alienating sameness of the crowd.

Speaker 2: Liesbeth Minnaard (Universiteit Leiden)

“Facing the Facts in Contemporary Dutch Literature. Representations of Refugees between Innumerability and Singularity”

In contemporary Europe the term “refugee” is predominantly used in combination with the term “crisis.” Strikingly, however, the element “crisis” in this omnipresent phrase rarely refers to the situations that these refugees are fleeing from; rather it denominates their desperate search for a safe haven in Europe, and their arrival at the European borders, as the main problem. In conjunction with this fraught rhetoric of a “refugee crisis,” the representation of the refugees themselves oscillates between, on the one hand, threatening images of a faceless mob, “flooding” the European continent, an image that is both fundamental and instrumental to the populist anti-refugee rhetoric that is rapidly gaining ground across Europe, and on the other hand, over(t)ly poignant images of displaced individuals that appear completely lost, helplessly subjected to their miserable fate.

In this paper I will scrutinise these two modes of representation that currently determine the media coverage of the “refugee crisis,” by juxtaposing them to very similar modes of representation in two works of contemporary Dutch literature. One is Elvis Peeters’ dystopian novel *De ontelbaren* (2005) which representation of refugees, as the title already



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suggests, falls more or less in the first, “dehumanising” category. The other is Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer’s awarded novel *La Superba* (2013) which contains a subnarrative that fits in with the second, let’s call it “individualizing” category of refugee representation.

The question directing my comparative analysis of these two novels not only concerns the particular narrative strategies that the two novels use in their depiction of the refugee characters, but it especially focuses on the various effects of these modes of representation: what do these narrative strategies bring about in terms of patterns of identification, how do they address and affect the reader, and do they – and if so, in what ways – encourage us to feel empathy with the refugee characters?

Finally, posing these questions to works of literature enables me to address and test the popular supposition that literature presents us with alternative, and often more complex and more challenging images than those we find in popular media. Does literature really prompt us to think in more nuanced ways, differently, about precarious issues that seem firmly stuck in rigid, black-and-white frames of interpretation?

15h00-15h30 Coffee and Closing Remarks



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