

**Centre for the Study of Migration,  
Queen Mary, University of London**

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2012**

**DISPLACEMENT, RESISTANCE, REPRESENTATION:  
Culture and Power in Contexts of Migrancy**



Landscapes of Desire © John Halaka

*RESIST.*

2009. Detail from drawing. Ink and Rubber Stamped Ink on Paper

The Centre for the Study of Migration at Queen Mary, University of London is pleased to announce its annual conference to be held on June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2012.

Organizer: Professor Parvati Nair ([p.nair@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:p.nair@qmul.ac.uk))

Venue: David Sizer Lecture Theatre, Francis Bancroft Building, Queen Mary, Mile End Campus, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS

N.B.: Attendance at this conference is FREE and OPEN TO ALL. Please note that all conference speakers and participants must provide their own lunches. Tea and coffee will be on offer to speakers. Others can purchase these from the numerous cafés and eateries on campus.

## *Programme*

**Thursday, June 28<sup>th</sup> 2012**

10:00 – 10:30: **Registration and Coffee**

10:30 – 10:45: **Welcome and Introduction**

10:45 – 12:15:

**Panel 1: Fields of Resistance**

Chair: *Federica Mazzara, University College London, UK*

*Speakers:*

*Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (Centre for Refugee Studies, University of Oxford, UK): 'Ideal and Unique Spaces: The Representation of Sahrawi Refugees in Algerian Camps'*

*Nayana Bibile (University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia): 'The Potentiality of the Archive: Dynamics of Resettlement amongst Bhutanese Refugees in Australia'*

*Pollyanna Rhee (Columbia University, New York, USA): 'Public Image Limited: The Ramapo Mountain Indians's Claims for Territory and Recognition'*

12:15 – 13:15:

**Keynote Lecture 1**

Chair: *Parvati Nair, Centre for the Study of Migration, QMUL, UK*

Speaker:

*Professor John Halaka (University of San Diego, California, USA): 'Portraits of Desire and Denial'*

13:15 – 14:30: **LUNCH (own arrangements)**

14:30 – 16:00:

**Panel 2: The Power of the Visual**

Chair: *Tendayi Bloom, QMUL, UK*

Speakers:

*Federica Mazzara (University College London, UK): 'Bodies of Lampedusa. Migration, Law and the Image'*

*Filippo Menozzi (University of Kent, UK): 'The Resistances of Beauty: Sebastião Salgado's Molecular Revolutions'*

*Claudia Sandberg (University of Southampton, UK): 'Stories of Chilean Life in German Exile – A Comparative Reading of *Isabel auf der Treppe* (1984) and *Aus der Ferne sehe ich dieses Land* (1978)'*

16:00 – 16:30: **TEA** (served in the Foyer of the Francis Bancroft Building)

16:30 – 17:30:

### **Film Screening and Discussion**

Chair: *Parvati Nair, Queen Mary University of London, UK*

Film : *Aaj Kaal (Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow)*, Avtar Brah and Jasbir Panesar, 1990

*Professor Avtar Brah (Birkbeck College, University of London) will discuss this film.*

19:00: **Conference Dinner** at *The Greedy Cow Restaurant*, 2 Grove Road, London E3 5AX

Directions: Turn left at the gates of Queen Mary and walk down Mile End Road, under the yellow bridge and towards the crossroads. Keep left and cross over at the traffic lights. *The Greedy Cow Restaurant* is directly in front of you on Grove Road.

**Friday, June 29th 2012**

10:00 – 10:30: **Coffee and Registration**

10:30 – 11:30:

**Panel 3: Sites of Resistance**

Chair: *Dominika Gasiowski, Queen Mary University of London, UK*

Speakers:

*Leila Whitley (Goldsmiths, University of London, UK): 'Monstrous tragedy: representations of migration and resistance'*

*Melissa Butcher (Open University, UK): 'Creative Disturbances in Global Space: a multi-media response to the gentrification of Delhi'*

11:30 – 12:30:

**Keynote Lecture 2**

Chair: *Parvati Nair, Queen Mary University of London, UK*

Speaker:

*Dr. Luis Cabrera (University of Birmingham, UK): 'Unauthorized Immigration as Principled Resistance'*

12:30 – 14:00: **LUNCH (own arrangements)**

14:00 – 15:30:

**Panel 4: Gender, Representation and Resistance**

Chair: *Jordana Blejmar, Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London,*

Speakers:

*Dominika Gasiorowski (Queen Mary, University of London, UK):*

‘Representing Prostitutes in Mexico City: Marginality in the Photographs of Maya Goded’

*Mattia Marino (UK, Italy, USA and the Netherlands):* ‘WALLS OUT Empowering Displacements with Amélie Nothomb, Lady Gaga and Ayaan Hirsi Ali’

*Taey Iohe (artist and researcher, UK, Ireland and South Korea),*

‘Displaced Sleepwalkers: Artistic Research’

15:30 - 16:00: **TEA**

16:00 – 16:45:

**Presentation and Discussion**

Chair: *Parvati Nair, Queen Mary, University of London, UK*

Speakers:

Presentation: *Professor John Halaka (University of San Diego, USA),*

‘Landscapes of Desire’

Discussant: *Jordana Blejmar (Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, School of Advanced Studies, University of London, UK)*

16:45 – 17.00:

*Tendayi Bloom (Queen Mary, University of London, UK):* **Summary and Conclusion**

**ABSTRACTS**  
**and**  
**SPEAKERS' BIO-DATA**

***Nayana Bibile*** (*University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia*): 'The Potentiality of the Archive: Dynamics of Resettlement amongst Bhutanese Refugees in Australia'

In 2008, after two decades in refugee camps in Nepal close to a 100 Bhutanese refugees boarded planes to Australia, one of several countries that have agreed to resettle this refugee population. Anyone who relocates to create a different future brings the past along with them. The question is how embedded and how important this past is and how much of that past forms that individual in the present, even while actively articulating the need to pursue a different future. The degree of desire for *that* particular future, the anticipatory mode of potentiality of the archive that has to be simultaneously tapped, created as well as transformed into the imaginary future, tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a community. The work on this paper is based on fieldwork carried out predominantly in Tasmania and elsewhere in Australia. In this vein, I will look at, some of the dynamics that emerged in encounters with a group of resettling Bhutanese refugees in routine interaction. This paper explores how during the process of 'learning to live' all over again, so to speak, we entangle and implicate each other in our lives and create new tensions. Particularly, as a non-white anthropologist embedded among mostly white NGO workers who act as service providers and catalysts to the resettling Bhutanese refugees' entry into a new life in Australia.

**Nayana Bibile** is a doctoral scholar of Social Anthropology at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, Australia. She did her MSc in Social Anthropology at University College London (UCL). Nayana is currently a visiting scholar at the Fondation Brocher in Geneva, Switzerland. Email: [nayana.bibile@gmail.com](mailto:nayana.bibile@gmail.com)

***Jordana Blejmar*** (*Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, School of Advanced Studies, University of London, UK*), Discussant

**Jordana Blejmar** is a Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the IGRS. She has taught Latin American cultural studies at the University of Manchester and the University of Cambridge. Her doctoral research at Cambridge was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and explores the links between the imagination and the documentary in the second-generation cultural memory of post-dictatorship

Argentina. Originally a literature graduate from the University of Buenos Aires, she was awarded an MPhil in Latin American Studies with a Simón Bolívar Fund at Cambridge. Before moving to the UK she worked for the Argentine Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Universidad de San Andrés. Since 2003, she has collaborated regularly with postgraduate courses on Education at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). She is the co-editor (with Natalia Fortuny and Luis Ignacio García) of *Instantáneas de la memoria: Fotografía y dictadura en Argentina y América latina* (Libreria, 2012). She has co-curated (with Fortuny) the photographic exhibition *Anachronies* at the Maison de l'Argentine in Paris, and has published articles and book chapters in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, UK and USA. Email: Jordana.Blejmar@sas.ac.uk

### ***Tendayi Bloom*** (*Queen Mary, University of London, UK*): Summary and Conclusion

**Tendayi Bloom** is in the final stages of her doctoral dissertation, entitled 'What should be the obligations of a state towards non-citizens present in its territory?' Her research focuses on the fact that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been a time of unprecedented movement – in 2005, an estimated 3% of the world population lived outside their country of birth. This has also been a time of widespread abuses of non-citizens. For example, the International Labour Organisation estimated in 2008 that about 15% of the total migrant flow is irregular, which means that at least 15% are outside usual welfare, and often even property-owning, rights. Yet despite the practical urgency of developing some joined up account of what should be the obligations of a state towards its non-citizen population, there is strikingly little work done in this area by political philosophers. Work seems to focus on whether a state should or should not admit people to its borders. Tendayi's research aims to provide a way in which questions of obligations towards territorially present non-citizens can be explored and eventually to provide a tentative answer to the question of what should be the obligations of a state towards non-citizens present in its territory. Email: r.t.bloom@qmul.ac.uk

***Professor Avtar Brah*** (*Birkbeck College, University of London*) will discuss the film *Aaj Kaal (Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow)*.

It has become commonplace to film elders. But it is not so usual for elders to make a film by themselves, especially South Asian elders in the diaspora. A little known film, *Aaj Kaal* (1990) was made over twenty years ago by South Asian elders, within a community education project based in Southall (London), directed by Avtar Brah and coordinated by Jasbir Panesar with the film trainer Vipin Kumar. To watch *Aaj Kaal* use the following Dark Matter

link: <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2012/04/03/aaj-kaal-yesterday-today-tomorrow-video/>

**Avtar Brah** Professor of Sociology at Birkbeck College, University of London. Amongst her numerous publications is the monograph *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (1996). Email: A.Brah@bbk.ac.uk

**Melissa Butcher** (*Open University, UK*): ‘Creative Disturbances in Global Space: a multi-media response to the gentrification of Delhi’  
As a consequence of converging global capital, technology and migration Delhi has become a prime example of the transformations and spatial inequalities that are marking cities in Asia and, I would argue, Europe. The remodelling into a ‘World Class’ city has involved the displacement of tens of thousands from ‘unauthorised’ settlements, to make way for new industry, an international sports spectacle and housing for new middle-classes. Bureaucracy and state power wore down many of the protests against these developments, but there emerged alternative forms of resistance taking place in interstitial spaces of the city, staying under the radar of state authorities. An example of this is *Cybermohalla* (Cyber-Neighbourhood), a multi-media project working with young people living in two Delhi resettlement colonies marked by transience and socio-economic deprivation. This presentation will provide an overview of the work of *CyberMohalla* and argue that it represents a particular form of cultural resistance in the shape of an alternative narrative to the marginalisation of these colonies and their residents within Delhi’s dominant discourse of ‘Global City’. Second, the presentation will argue that *Cybermohalla*’s work is an example of ‘cosmopolitanism from below’, although in this case developing creative competencies, including translation skills and imagination to manage processes of urban transformation and segmentation.

**Biography:**

Melissa Butcher is a lecturer in the Department of Geography, Open University, UK. The focus of her research is transnational mobility, cultural change and conflict in diverse urban spaces, emphasising questions of identity and belonging. Recent publications include *Managing Cultural Change: Reclaiming Synchronicity in a Mobile World* (Ashgate, forthcoming) and *Dissent and Cultural Resistance in Asia’s Cities* (with Selvaraj Velayutham, Routledge, 2009). Email: m.butcher@open.ac.uk

**Dr. Luis Cabrera** (*University of Birmingham, UK*): ‘Unauthorized Immigration as Principled Resistance’

Most unauthorized immigrants can be said to practice something akin to global civil disobedience within a nascent global “civil rights” movement. By offering principled, though covert, resistance to the kinds of restrictive entry laws that are the norm in the current global system, they are relentlessly highlighting tensions between the structural features of that system and the universal moral principles that its most prominent nation-states have formally affirmed. Further, they are provoking the



consideration of questions about membership, exclusions, and distributions that are central to accounts of global citizenship. In practice, they may be doing more than any other international actor to cause affluent states to give attention to the concerns of those in impoverished countries. They also may be promoting incremental changes toward the kinds of institutional transformations above the state that could enable more concrete practices of global citizenship.

**Luis Cabrera** is Reader in Political Theory at the University of Birmingham. His most recent book, *The Practice of Global Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press 2010), was awarded the 2011 Yale H. Ferguson prize from the International Studies Association-Northeast (USA). His current book project, *The Possibility of Global Political Community*, seeks to identify best practices for transnational or global democracy through giving fine-grained attention to democracy under conditions of deep diversity in such states as India, within the European Union and in the UK. Email: a.l.cabrera@bham.ac.uk

***Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh*** (*Centre for Refugee Studies, University of Oxford, UK*): ‘Ideal and Unique Spaces: The Representation of Sahrawi Refugees in Algerian Camps’

Drawing on research conducted with and about Sahrawi refugees in their Algerian-based refugee camps, in this paper I examine how, why, and to what effect Sahrawi refugees, humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alike have represented the Sahrawi refugee camps as "ideal" and "unique spaces", in particular by invoking tropes of “gender equality” and “female empowerment” in the camps. On the one hand, I argue that such representations form part of the Sahrawi's politics of survival, since these discourses help ensure the continued provision of humanitarian and political support from diverse state and non-state actors around the world. On the other hand, however, since discourses “create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe” (Said, 1979:94), I argue that this idealized system of representation has played a critical role in “creating” donors’ “knowledge” about life in the Sahrawi camps, in turn influencing the development of policies and programmes implemented there with detrimental effects. Concurrently, the paper elucidates the role played by international observers in accepting and reinforcing the designation of specific groups of refugees and women as “ideal” and “good” to the detriment of others. Evaluating refugee (and indeed non-refugee) situations through comparative frameworks and notions of "positional superiority" (following Nader, 1989:324) by necessity constitutes “other” refugee groups and women as “bad”, thereby re-victimizing these individuals and groups, potentially inducing antagonisms and solidifying hierarchies rather than encouraging observers (and the observed themselves) to contest such processes.

**Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh** is Departmental Lecturer in Forced Migration at the Refugee Studies Centre (University of Oxford), and Junior Research Fellow in Refugee Studies at Lady Margaret Hall. Elena has conducted research with and about Muslim forced migrants in refugee camps and host cities across the Middle East and North Africa (esp. Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Syria) as well as in Cuba and Europe

(esp. Spain and the UK). Her main research interests pertain to the intersections between gender, Islam and asylum; representations of Muslim asylum-seekers and refugees; and faith-based humanitarianism in contexts of forced displacement. At Oxford she lectures on the MSc core course in 'Research Methods in Forced Migration,' convenes the MSc option in 'Gender, Generation and Forced Migration,' and co-convenes an MPhil option in 'Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa.' Elena has been the Director of the RSC's International Summer School in Forced Migration since 2010. Email: elena.fiddian-qasmiyeh@qeh.ox.ac.uk

***Dominika Gasiorowski*** (Queen Mary, University of London, UK):

Representing Prostitutes in Mexico City: Marginality in the Photographs of Maya Goded

Maya Goded is one of the most prolific contemporary Mexican photographers. The subject of this paper will be her album entitled *Good Girls* (2006), which contains images of prostitutes working in the oldest red-light-district of Mexico City. After briefly situating Goded in the context of Mexican photography and its relationship with representing marginality, I will focus on the ethical tension involved in socially engaged visual production using the *Good Girls* as an example. I will analyse the role of photography in highlighting the marginal situation of its deprived subjects and forging a cultural space for otherwise unrepresented or underrepresented people, while taking into consideration the risks of fetishizing and commercialising the suffering of others. My close analysis of a selection of photographs from the album will exemplify different representations of women within the frame of their internal displacement. The images' potential for empowerment as well as exploitation will be considered. The main goal of this examination is not to determine the moral value of Goded's engagement with the people she photographs, but to focus on teasing out the ethical complexities of representing and looking at images of subaltern subjects.

**Dominika Gasiorowski** is currently working on a PhD at Queen Mary's Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies under the supervision of Professor Parvati Nair and Professor Elza Adamowicz. The title of her project is *Mediating Mexican Otherness: Subalternity in Maya Goded's Socially Engaged Photodocumentaries*. Queen Mary is her alma mater, where in 2008 she completed a BA in Hispanic Studies, which she then followed with an MPhil at King's College, Cambridge. Email: d.cyrankowska@qmul.ac.uk

**Professor John Halaka** (*University of San Diego, California, USA*): 1.  
Keynote Lecture 1

‘Portraits of Desire and Denial’



Umm Aziz, smelling soil from A'mka, the village she was displaced from in 1948.  
©John Halaka



Dr. Mohammad Khalil looking at his pre-1948 Palestinian passport. He left Palestine to study law in the U.K in 1945 and was never allowed to return to his homeland.  
©John Halaka



Boulos Khoury with a pre-1948 photo of ethnically cleansed and destroyed village, Ikrit.  
©John Halaka

During periods of extended political conflict, art is often be the best way for a society under the stress of cultural annihilation to sustain itself, critique its attackers as well as preserve and project its historical identity to the world. This is very much the case in Palestine and the Palestinian diaspora today, where art is increasingly being used and seen as a weapon of resistance.

This talk will explore some of my previous research on contemporary Palestinian Art, while focusing on a multi-disciplinary project that I am currently developing in Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan. The project is entitled *Portraits of Desire & Denial* and is being developed over five phases. It includes documentary films, video archives of interviews with three generations of Palestinian refugees, as well as narrative portrait drawings of those refugees.

My goal from the start of this project was to record and present the personal experiences and memories of Palestinian refugees living in Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, and to convey parts of the modern story of Palestine directly through the formative life experiences of a small group of those individuals.

It continues to be my belief and guiding principle in this project, that personal experiences narrated directly by an individual, are the most effective method of preserving and conveying history and the most meaningful way of igniting social and political transformation. The African-American writer James Baldwin suggested this approach most clearly when he said: “*When circumstances are made real by another’s testimony, it becomes possible to envision change.*”

## 2. Presentation

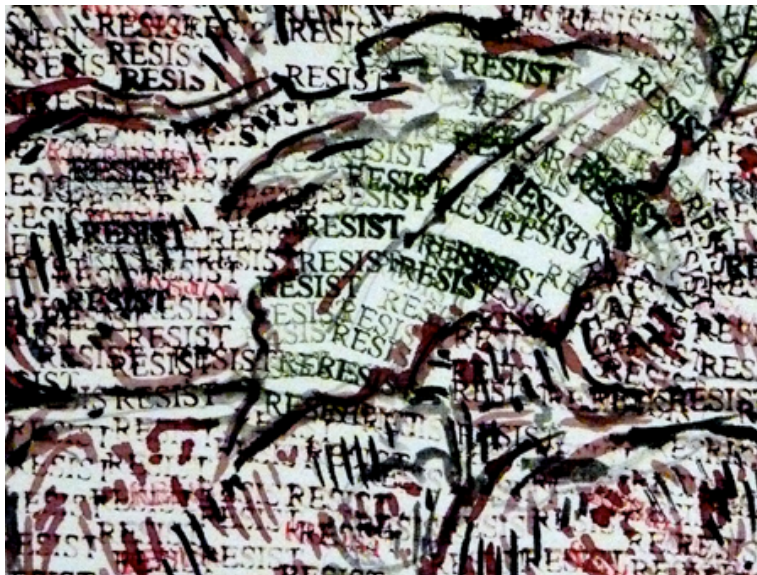
### *Landscapes of Desire*



Landscapes of Desire.

*RETURN.*

2009. Ink and Rubber-stamped Ink on Paper ©John Halaka



Landscapes of Desire.

*RESIST.*

2009. Detail from drawing. Ink and Rubber Stamped Ink on Paper

©John Halaka

I will discuss and present images of my drawings from the series *Landscapes of Desire*, developed between 2009 and 2011. The drawings are inspired by the ruins of Palestinian villages and homes that were destroyed by Israel during and after the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine. They raise questions about the viewer's relationships to a concealed Palestinian landscape of displacement that has been buried in the shadows of history for over six decades. The images reflect on an unrelenting effort to annihilate a Palestinian culture that refuses to disappear and an indigenous people that refuse to go away. Drawings of the ruins of stone homes from destroyed Palestinian villages such as Kafr Bir'im, Lifta, Al-Bassa, A'mka and Kuikat, are a declaration that in the face of looming cultural annihilation, the persistence of memory is a crucial act of political resistance and cultural survival.

The images are rendered with ink and rubber stamped words. The repeated stamping of the words defines the forms, textures and tones of the landscapes, but most importantly, the repeated words employed to construct the drawings become a visual mantra, compelling us to “remember”, “resist”, “return”, “rebuild” and prepare to “forgive”.

The drawings are witness to a tragic history of Palestinian displacement, and invite each viewer to reflect on their moral responsibility to ending a seemingly perpetual cycle of violence.

**John Halaka** is a Visual Artist, Documentary Filmmaker and Professor of Visual Arts at the University of San Diego, where he has taught since 1991. As an activist artist, John Halaka’s creative work serves as a vehicle for meditation on personal, cultural and political concerns. His drawings, paintings and documentary film projects are informed by the Palestinian experiences of displacement and the persistent desire of the refugees to reclaim their homes and homeland. “Through my work, I attempt to initiate a dialogue with the viewer that could instigate transformation, one person at a time.”

Professor Halaka received his MFA in the Visual Arts from the University of Houston in 1983, and his B.A. in Fine Arts from the City University of New York Baccalaureate Program, with Brooklyn College as home school. He is of Palestinian descent and was born in El Mansoura, Egypt, in 1957. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Research Fellowship to develop the second phase of the project *Portraits of Desire & Denial*, in Lebanon during the 2011-2012 academic year. A solo exhibition of his drawings from the series Landscapes of Desire, was displayed at the Mosaic Rooms Gallery in London in May 2011. Halaka has screened his films and exhibited his artwork in solo and group exhibitions internationally. His artwork was included in the exhibit *Made In Palestine*, organized by the Station Museum, in Houston Texas, as well as, *IN-VISIBLE*, the inaugural exhibition at the Arab American National Museum in Detroit, Michigan. His recent documentary film credits include *The Presence of Absence in the Ruins of Kafr Bir'im* (60 minutes, released November 2007, SittingCrow Productions) and *Wounds of the Heart: An Artist and her Nations* (53 minutes. February 2009. SittingCrow Productions).

A selection of Halaka’s paintings and drawings can be viewed on his web site [www.johnhalaka.com](http://www.johnhalaka.com). Information about his film projects and archives of video interviews can be found on his other web site [www.sittingcrowproductions.com](http://www.sittingcrowproductions.com).

He can be contacted at the following address:

Professor John Halaka  
Department of Art  
University of San Diego  
5998 Alcala Park  
San Diego, CA 92110  
Email: [jhalaka@sandiego.edu](mailto:jhalaka@sandiego.edu)

**Taey Iohe** (*artist and researcher, UK, Ireland and South Korea*),  
'Displaced Sleepwalkers: Artistic Research'

This paper invites you to follow a transcultural narrative project which tells the imaginary displacement story of Hyeseok Na (1896 - 1948, a Korean proto-feminist activist and landscape painter). Na yearned to travel freely throughout her painful and fraught life as a woman and artist during the Japanese colonial period in Korea. She died alone and her body was only discovered a few months after her death. Na's imaginary travelling was the anchor which carried the physicality of her work. Hyeseok Na and Mary Wollstonecraft emerged from different backgrounds, in consecutive centuries, writing different languages within divergent cultures. In the narrative, they share an artistic gaze upon, and orientation towards, the world of displacement; this is in spite of the difficult circumstances of their lives. I was searching for the nature of 'locality' via this fictional meeting.

*Sleepwalkers* and *Lure of Lawn* are parts of a larger conceptual project, *Strangers in the Neighbourhood*, which dramatises displacement, sexuality, and location through a transhistorical encounter with Na. The project started as a piece of artistic research, which I constituted as an exchange of letters, psycho-geographical walks, workshops and photography taken into the street, in order to break the barrier between private space and public space, home space and foreign space. This work is a snapshot of a ghost, and a travelogue, but also an account of living as a migrant from Asia in the hidden places of my own neighbourhood. I will expand on my artistic interventions in the frame of postcolonial practice in the paper; these are aimed at characterising displacement as a cultural translation and an unfolding of identity schemas.

**Taey Iohe** is an artist and researcher based in London, Dublin and Seoul. She is a PhD Candidate with the SMARTlab Research Institute at University College Dublin in Ireland. She focuses on creating a new vocabulary for artistic intervention in social contexts such as diaspora, displacement, travelling and translation within a geopolitical frame. Her main interest is now in how language and linguistic transformation can illuminate the interplay between identity politics and cultures. She has been recently invited as an emerging poet and filmmaker to show her work at the Literature Berlin 2010 exhibition. Her artworks have been exhibited internationally; London (ToandFor Galley), Seoul (Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Arts), Paris (Le Cube), Koln (Experimental Video Arts), Poznan (Art District), San Francisco (UC Berkeley), Rotterdam (BAD Foundation) and Dublin (Golden Threads Gallery).  
website: <http://www.taey.com> Email: taeyster@gmailcom

**Mattia Marino** (*UK, Italy, USA and the Netherlands*): 'WALLS OUT  
Empowering Displacements with Amélie Nothomb, Lady Gaga and  
Ayaan Hirsi Ali'

Representations of resistance in and through displacement encompass an empowering bending and rebuilding of socially shaped walls of shared meanings and values

outside of the historical and geographical frames of cultural identities. A nuanced picture of this can be drawn on carefully chosen themes and styles from select fairly recent semi-autobiographic works by the Japanese born Belgian novelist Amélie Nothomb, the Italian American performer Lady Gaga, and the Somali-Dutch political author Ayaan Hirsi Ali, particularly the globally set novel *Biographie de la faim* [A Biography of Hunger], the music video *Alejandro* with Mexican and (anti-)catholic undertones, and the Islam-claustrophobic life story *Mijn Vrijheid* [My Freedom]. This comparative sketch engages with manifold positionings of socio-economic marginality and privilege within the broad spectrum of experiences of migration from a wide variety of female cultural and bodily self-negotiations. Zooming in on thematic and stylistic features centred on the tropes of rape, abjection, and empathy may show these forms of representation.

**Mattia Marino** is a language teaching consultant, with links to the United Kingdom, Italy, America, and the Netherlands, and publications also in the cultural journal *Otherness* and the poetry journal *BlazeVOX* about manifold cases of the historical mix of uproar and social safety, including French public shocks, Italian political films, gruesome American music videos, and German writings on social upheavals. He teaches Italian and European history at Bangor University, Wales, and convenes international seminars with the American Comparative Literature Association. Email: [mattiamarinoczmt@mail.com](mailto:mattiamarinoczmt@mail.com)

***Federica Mazzara*** (*University College London, UK*): ‘Bodies of Lampedusa. Migration, Law and the Image’

Lampedusa, a tiny island that belongs politically to Italy and geographically to Africa, is today the most controversial place within the Mediterranean. It lives off tourism for nearly eight months a year but it is forced to deal almost daily with what is commonly perceived, in public opinion, as an ‘invasion of Europe’ by migrants from the African continent. This paper aims at analysing on the one hand, the legal, political and mass-media discourses, with their related construction of normative practices, that influence the public imagery of the ‘others’; and on the other, the representation of these subjects in visual discourses, from mass media to cinema and visual art.

For a variety of reasons that this paper intends to explore, migrants are most commonly considered and represented as ‘bodies without words’ (Agamben 2005). The paper will show how the aesthetics of the migrant body can lend a ‘voice’ to alternative ways in which we may imagine and reconsider the conditions under which contemporary migration challenges Italian and European politics, ethics and aesthetics. In particular, the focus of the paper will be the representation of migrant bodies of Lampedusa under three specific forms: compressed bodies in containers and boats, floating or drowned corpses and clandestine bodies within Italy and Europe.

**Dr Federica Mazzara** is Teaching Fellow and Honorary Research Fellow at the UCL Italian Department. Her main research interests are multiculturalism in literature and cinema, translation studies and the relationship between literature and other arts. She has recently published her first monograph on the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his interartistic production (*Lettere in Cornice. Traduzioni artistico-letterarie di*



*Dante Gabriel Rossetti/Framed Letters. Verbal/Art translations by Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Catania-Roma: Bonanno, 2010). Email: f.mazzara@ucl.ac.uk

**Filippo Menozzi** (*University of Kent, UK*): ‘The Resistances of Beauty: Sebastião Salgado's Molecular Revolutions’

This paper will propose a re-reading of Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik's travel journal *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* – an account of Guattari's journey to post-dictatorial Brazil in 1982 – through some pictures by Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado, especially some images taken from his volume *Migrations. Humanity in Transition* (2000). The aim of my reflections will be a rethinking of the role of the aesthetic in practices of transregional micropolitical resistance, a theme that is mentioned in some passages in Guattari's book and that, though ambivalently, might be central to Salgado's compositions. Indeed, Salgado's photography could shed some light on the ways in which artistic creation could take part in what Guattari called “molecular revolutions,” that is, the reorientations of desire in the production of transversal political subjectivities. Rather than investing aesthetic forms with a propositional political content, there are aspects of Salgado's work that might be interpreted as a re-imagining of beauty in dissident collective assemblages of enunciation, a contribution to the invention of alternative forms of sociability and political expression eluding the rule of commodification. Whereas Salgado's visual representation of migratory phenomena could help us elaborate on Guattari's meditations on the animistic, polyphonic and transindividual aspects of artistic creation, Guattari's writings could suggest different views on Salgado's work and a situation of the auratic beauty reinvented in his images in a context of resistance to the segregating logic of global capitalism.

**Filippo Menozzi** is about to complete a PhD in Postcolonial Studies at the University of Kent. He is co- editing a book titled *Visa Stories. Experiences between Law and Migration* for Cambridge Scholars Publishing. His research and teaching interests are: postcolonial literature, psychoanalysis, aesthetic theories, and narratives of migration. Email: fm73@kent.ac.uk

**Parvati Nair**, Conference Organizer

**Parvati Nair** is Professor of Hispanic, Cultural and Migration Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research is in Cultural Studies, with a particular interest in theories and representations of migration, mobility, urban spaces, displacement, ethnicity and gender. She writes mainly on photography, film and music in these contexts and relies on an interdisciplinary approach that includes fieldwork. She is the Principal Editor of [Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture](#).

Recent publications include *A Different Light: The Photography of Sebastião Salgado* (Duke University Press, 2011). Email: [p.nair@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:p.nair@qmul.ac.uk)

***Pollyanna Rhee*** (*Columbia University, New York, USA*): ‘Public Image Limited: The Ramapo Mountain Indians’s Claims for Territory and Recognition’

Just twenty-five miles outside of Manhattan, the Appalachian Mountains pass through the northeast corner of New Jersey and southeast New York. Though much of the area has recently experienced urbanization and gentrification due to its proximity to most populous city in the United States, a small, isolated people numbering in the thousands reside in settlements in this area. The Ramapo Mountain Indians have used various methods to assert their public identity from establishing clans, formalizing settlements, and tracing their lineage through stories and rituals despite their lack of recognition as a Native tribe and the accompanying right to territory by the federal government. Additionally the consequences of several years of dumping of untreated waste by a Ford Motor Company assembly plant and other environmental hazards have threatened to displace these individuals from their homes.

My project aims towards two goals. The first is to lift out the means—through media, culture, and activism—that the Ramapo Mountain Indians have asserted their rights for territory and recognition, especially in relationship to the requirements of the state and federal governments to be recognized as a Native American tribe. The second is to add some dynamism to the historical narrative by providing visual evidence through spatial data and information graphics highlighting the shifting circumstances of their demands. The task of this project is not to attempt to come to any firm resolution or prescription, but to emphasize the tensions between culture and politics and the claims to territory.

**Pollyanna Rhee** is a PhD student in History and Theory of Architecture at Columbia University. Her research focuses on architecture’s relationship with the development of the social sciences and conceptions of expertise in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Prior to doctoral studies she was a Research Fellow at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts in Chicago and worked on community-based architectural projects in New York. She holds a MS in Architecture from Columbia University and a BA in Politics and History from Wake Forest University. Contact details: Pollyanna Rhee, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Columbia University Email: [cyr2101@columbia.edu](mailto:cyr2101@columbia.edu)

***Claudia Sandberg*** (*University of Southampton, UK*): ‘Stories of Chilean Life in German Exile – A Comparative Reading of *Isabel auf der Treppe* (1984) and *Aus der Ferne sehe ich dieses Land* (1978)’

The terror and violence of Pinochet's dictatorship provoked many left-wing activists, intellectuals and artists to leave Chile. Among other countries, Chileans came to live in East and/or West Germany. A number of East and West German films addressed problems that Chilean émigrés faced in their German host countries. I propose to compare *Isabel auf der Treppe* (*Isabel On The Stairs*, Hannelore Unterberg, 1984), a film produced by the East German production company DEFA, with *Aus der Ferne sehe ich dieses Land* (*I See This Land From Afar*, Christian Ziewer, 1978), produced by the West German TV channel WDR. The films star young protagonists, who, born in Chile and growing up in East or West Berlin, adjust to the new surroundings, while their parents are burdened by experiences of individual and collective trauma. I will examine how the larger ideological conflict between the German states and their rhetoric about the Third World structure the cinematic texts at hand. Aside from a political reading, I will study which tropes, narrative and aesthetic parameters the films might share. I argue that the films function in a complementary way, in that they bring various perspectives to this story of displacement. Ultimately, *Isabel* and *I See This Land From Afar* belong to a body of film which chronicle the Chilean diaspora of the 1970s and 1980s in both Germanys.

**Claudia Sandberg** works as a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Southampton. She has just completed her Ph.D. dissertation on the German-Jewish-Uruguayan filmmaker Peter Lilienthal at the University of Southampton and has presented several papers on this subject at conferences in Europe and the United States. Her current research project focuses on Chile and Chileans in German Cinema 1973-1989. Since September 2011, she has been working as a Research Fellow in film studies; her project focuses on Chile and Chileans in German Cinema, 1973-1989. Claudia is especially interested in diaspora and exile cinema, East German cinema and reception studies. Email: C.Sandberg@soton.ac.uk

**Leila Whitley** (*Goldsmiths, University of London, UK*):

‘Monstrous tragedy: representations of migration and resistance’

Discussions of migration commonly invoke the violence that occurs at the territorial borders of the nation-state and the suffering of migrants who attempt to transgress these boundaries. Newspapers and academic writing alike are populated with stories of the deaths of Central American migrants in the US-Mexico borderlands and of boats of African migrants adrift in the mediterranean. In this paper I will ask how these discussions of migration construct migrants, and how they might either extend the projects of border defense which have generated the violence, or be used to reconstruct the political scene that has enabled the violence. How might it be possible to avoid re-inscribing the violence of the same in discussions of migration, and to instead use representations of migration to support projects of resistance and migrant empowerment?

In this paper I will first work through some of the complexities of the politics of representing violence and migration. Drawing on examples of discussions in popular media and academic work, I will show the ways in which Agamben is right to point

out that representations of a person as a desperate being ultimately colludes with state power, and why Papadopoulos and Tsianos argue that representations of migration, “as monstrous tragedy supply equally the ubiquitous humanitarian discourses as well as the xenophobic and racist politics of forced repatriation” (6). Having established this critique, I will then consider modes of discussing and representing migration that thwart xenophobic politics and support resistance, again drawing on examples in practice.

**Leila Whitley** is a Phd Candidate at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London. She has an MA in Cultural Studies 2008 (Distinction) from Goldsmiths, University of London and a BA in English: Cultural Studies 2006 (Distinction) from McGill University. She has also studied and worked in Mexico as an activist, both in Chiapas and at the Arizona/Sonora border, and have been active with no borders work and student strikes in Quebec and the UK. Email: [cu701lw@gold.ac.uk](mailto:cu701lw@gold.ac.uk)

