static

thoughts and research from global dis:connect

#3.2

special issue:

Mediterranean absences

static

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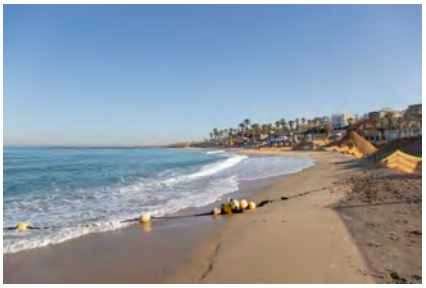

gdc **global dis :connect**

#3.2 | 2024

editorial

Hanni Geiger & Tom Menger

This special issue of *static* is dedicated to Mediterranean absences. Among other work, it contains contributions from the 2023 gd:c summer school. The event focused on the Mediterranean – particularly on migration and (post)coloniality – in the past, present and future. This issue reflects manifold negotiations of absences including invisibilities, erasures, voids, exclusions and disappearances and their relations to global dis:connectivity.

Mediterranean absences, entanglements and disentanglements are fruitful research objects. They are not simply absent in the sense of invisible. Rather, absences have spatiality, materiality and agency, and, as Derrida noted, leave traces. They are also a perspective; they necessitate their own methodologies, combining different disciplines, theories and practices. The arts have proven particularly fruitful in illuminating absences.

This special issue reflects how our summer school participants engaged with Mediterranean absences last year. Dis:connections as absences can refer to places and social systems, personal and collective affects and memories, narratives and methodologies. Perceiving the sea as a border, a migration route, a transitory space of waiting and loss, a symbol or place of refuge, and a place of gender-related dis:connections, as the authors in this section do, reveals the range of how absences can be instantiated. The contributions to the special section treat absences in terms of forced migration and (post)colonialism. These two (interrelated) global forces derive from the Mediterranean's status as a site of

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Fig. 01
Tom Menger
(Photo: Lambert Strehlke)

complex social and environmental dynamics related to power asymmetries.

Samira Yildirim introduces the Mediterranean as a border. Far from an idealised holiday destination, she points to the sea's geopolitical relevance for the EU's external border regime. She examines Heinrich Völkel's photographs of the demilitarised zone on Cyprus, showing how art reflects the Mediterranean as a place of exclusion.

In her photo essay, Rim Harmessi discusses the Kerkennah Islands as a transit zone of illegal immigration to Europe. With subtle, personal poetry, she follows the material and emotional traces of refugees who died or were trapped on the archipelago.

Absences related to Mediterranean migration also captivated Florian Bachmeier. In his aesthetically refined photographs, the omission of certain motifs in visual media is a potent stylistic tool to draw attention to what the image omits. He points to the absence of people in usually crowded places and the lack of security and stability at borders and in refugee camps.

Jonathan Jonsson engages with the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, especially relating to his experiences of exile around the Mediterranean. He negotiates the sea as a symbol of exile and displacement in a region long marked by colonialism.

Colonialism also motivates Tal Hafner's contribution. She uncovers the history of the Ajami neighbourhood in Tel Aviv and how Israel has colonised an Arab neighbourhood over several decades. Her photography explores the agency of a sea that washes traces of former dwellings and their materials to shore, revealing the absences of the former Palestinian inhabitants.

Shaul Marmari tackles absent narratives about the Mediterranean. He explores its place in relation to the Red Sea in the Israeli imagination, noting the conspicuous absence of the latter. Contrary to the widespread perception that the Red Sea and the Mediterranean are considered two distinct bodies of water, Israel has always thought of them together, strategically and in the broader culture.

The contributions from (art) history, cultural studies, literary studies and photography reflect the range of approaches required to research global absences. This entails recognising local perspectives as well as intimate and experimental approaches that recast dominant discourses on globalisation.

Beyond the special section, this issue also contains two further insightful essays. Sabrina Moura revisits the exhibition she held at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich, which reframed 19th-century transfers between Munich and Brazil. She highlights

the colonial practices of Bavarian scientists, which included kidnapping Amazonian children. Moura sheds light on the dis:connections behind these scientific endeavours.

Peter Seeland examines Justin Brice Guariglia's landscape photography through an ecocritical lens, situating his work in the discourse on the Anthropocene. He underscores how Guariglia elicits reflection on contemporary relationships between human and nature, encouraging deeper critical engagement with ecological concerns.

The Latin etymology of *mediterranean* suggests that it is something in the middle of the land, implying a gap between things of greater substance. This issue presents a variety of perspectives on absences, but for all their coverage, gaps will always remain. As ever, there can be no connection without disconnection, whether across the globe, a sea or the pages of a journal.

Hanni Geiger & Tom Menger, November 2024

Fig. 02
Hanni Geiger
(Photo: Lambert Strehlke)

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De facto border. The division of Cyprus in contemporary photography by Heinrich Völkel

Samira Yildirim

This essay deals with the question of how artists show and document the topography and landscape of a border. Since the end of the 20th century, borders have been developed into a global network of 'sorting machines' in which integration, separation and transfer take place.[1] Artists conduct artistic field research along borders and with their works of art capture artificial divisions, politically negotiated and often militarily guarded barriers of the world. Art is, therefore, part of the practice and research of topography, which is made up of the Greek words *tópos* for place and *gráphein* for drawing or writing, referring to the description, measurement and representation of a place. Although we see the green and built borders in the images, they simultaneously disappear through their reification, as we aesthetically experience representations of water, sand, mountains, trees, rivers, meadows, cities, villages, roads, traffic routes and infrastructures, which in turn is antithetical to the knowledge of the violence of borders.

The Mediterranean plays an important role as a border because it is much more than just a tourist destination for holidaymakers, but also a geopolitically relevant location of the EU's external border regime. Fortress Europe marks its border to the south in the Mediterranean with various counterparts, and it is being successively expanded and upgraded, making it a constant source of conflict. The absurdity of carving a constructed border

1 Steffen Mau, *Sortiermaschinen: Die Neuerfindung der Grenze im 21. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2021), 19.

into natural topography is clearly illustrated by the sea. Broad and deep waters are already insurmountable hurdles for us humans. Declaring them political borders plays into the hands of states, as no border architectures are required here to demarcate one territorial state from another. At the same time, maritime borders have the advantage of appearing natural, which makes them 'less vulnerable to attack'.[2]

As a border, the Mediterranean is complex and controversial, as the Mediterranean space is formed in the past and future primarily through its relationships, as Fernand Braudel pointed out in his extensive *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* in 1949.[3] This incongruity between political, cultural and social connections and divisions is the subject of numerous contemporary artists who analyse the Mediterranean as a hybrid border region.

Camera view of absences

OSTKREUZ – a Berlin-based photographers' cooperative – produced *Über Grenzen* in Berlin and Dresden in 2012.[4] Through the medium of photography, the members of the cooperative approached social questions about borders, clarifying that borders inscribe themselves onto everyday life and humans' living spaces as well as onto nature. They can take on military, social, architectural and ethical forms. The topography of a border can never be captured in its entirety and remains fragmented in the images. A line on a map can depict the entire course of a border. The topographical works, on the other hand, present very limited and individual perspectives.

Heinrich Völkel is a member of OSTKREUZ and integrated motifs of deserted streets, abandoned buildings, UN observation posts and a dilapidated airport into his photo series The Green Line. These are places that separate Northern Cyprus from the Republic of Cyprus. The Green Line, a buffer zone established by the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964, is intended to maintain a ceasefire and covers around three per cent of the island. The zone stretches from east to west, shrinks to six metres wide in the capital Nicosia and widens to seven kilometres elsewhere. It separates the Turkish Cypriot north from the Greek Cypriot south.

2 Anke Hoffmann, 'Border Sampling – oder von hier nach hier', in *Nevin Aladağ. Border Sampling,* ed. Matthias Lenz and Regina Michel (Friedrichshafen: Rober Gessler, 2011), 5. This work was published in conjunction with an eponymous exhibition at the Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen, 21 October–4 December 2011. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author.

3 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'epoque de Philippe II*. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949).

4 OSTKREUZ – Agentur der Fotografen, *Über Grenzen = On borders* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), exhibition catalogue for Über Grenzen, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 9 November – 31 December 2012; Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden, 17 May – 11 August 13.

The buffer zone passed through three stages of escalation and isolation.[5] Between 1955 and 1963 there was the so-called 'Mason-Dixon line' – barriers between the Greek and Turkish neighbourhoods. British colonisation of the island ended in 1959 with Treaties of London and Zürich Agreements, thanks to which Cyprus gained sovereignty. The second stage of the escalation took place in December 1963, with serious riots that led to a ceasefire agreement and the physical barrier of the Green Line – a semi-open cordon with checkpoints and the ability to close certain areas in the event of conflict. After the Greek military coup and the subsequent occupation of the north by Turkish military forces in the summer of 1974, the buffer zone was closed and fortified, representing the continuing third stage. On 15 November 1983, the parliament of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus proclaimed its independence, which is not recognised by any UN member except Turkey. As a result, the island's internal border has been a *de facto* and not a *de jure* border since 1974. Attempts at reunification have failed and have no prospect of success. Borders of this kind are provisional and permanent sources of conflict.

5 Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth, *Divided Cities. Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 123.

Fig. 1
Heinrich Völkel: *UN buffer zone, Airport Lefkosia*, Nicosia, 2012. A former international airport with the decommissioned Hawker Siddeley Trident of Cyprus Airways. The airport was between the fronts during the fighting and has been closed ever since. Photo from The Green Line series. Copyright Heinrich Völkel/ Ostkreuz

Heinrich Völkel took photographs in deserted villages, in Nicosia and its natural surroundings in the border area. Völkel sought traces of the island's partition. The pictures show barricaded streets and rooms lined with barbed wire and loopholes as well as a green mountain ridge, which is named as a UN observation post in the title of OSTKREUZ's picture.[6] The border between the north and south appears in all the pictures, evoking a formerly united island.

The motif of Nicosia International Airport, which ceased operation in 1974 due to the conflict and is now located within the buffer zone, provides an example. In one picture, we see a plane, derelict and gutted, with smashed windows, missing doors, a dirty surface and barbed wire (figure 1). The aircraft belonged to Cyprus Airways and is still parked at the defunct airport in Nicosia. The airline lost two planes and the airport infrastructure as a result of the war. Lakarna military airport in the south, which was expanded in the same year, and Ercan airport in the north have been used since the island's partition.

Another picture shows a waiting room on the airport grounds. The room is dilapidated, the seat cushions and the floor are littered with bird droppings (figure 2). The photographs confirm the absence of something once present. Half a century has passed since the buffer zone was established, and the images show that this provisional and persistent condition has become permanent without resolution. Völkel's visual language shows that nothing remains of the former coexistence but absence. Constance de Gourcy describes this emptiness and absence as a 'double presence', which results in an ambivalent relationship between two sides:

> *[…] absence is not only the opposite of presence as might be suggested by the overtaking – which is also a replacement – of the 'double absence' by the 'double presence', but an institution of meaning which defines a system of places and relational modalities between members geographically distant from a given collective.*[7]

According to De Gourcy, the experience of absence, which inevitably arises through migration and border crossings, is generated by the missing or the stranger and their relationship to the original place across distances.[8] In relation to Cyprus, the absence of each group in the other creates a connection between them. From 1963 onwards, the populations segregated, with Turkish Cypriots relocating to the north and the Greek Cypriots moving

6 OSTKREUZ – Agentur der Fotografen, *Über Grenzen,* 132.
7 Constance De Gourcy, 'The Institutionalization of Absence in the Mediterranean', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée,* 2018, http://journals.openedition.org/remmm/11687.
8 Gourcy, 'The Institutionalization of Absence'.

south or leaving the island altogether. Evidence of this relocation remains, and Heinrich Völkel focused on the gaps left by this absence. For example, the classroom covered with straw and a blackboard in the centre of the picture with a quote by Kemal Atatürk: 'Ne mutlu Türküm diyene' – 'Happy is the one who calls himself/herself a Turk' (figure 3). The abandoned school is located in the south and was being used as a cattle shed at the time of the photo. The inscription on the blackboard is an oath that was used in Turkish schools to instil children with Turkish nationalist sentiment.

The picture simultaneously documents the former presence of a Turkish Cypriot population in the south as well as a failed multi-ethnic reality that could have obtained in Cyprus after its independence. In the repurposed classroom, Atatürk's sentence seems like a curse. Völkel's photographs of the internal Cypriot border not only show the moment when the photograph was taken and the status quo of this border; they also point to a past in which two groups lived in the same place.

Heinrich Völkel's photographic practice is documentary, and he works in series: 'Only this sorting and arranging approach

Fig. 2
Heinrich Völkel: UN buffer zone, Airport Lefkosia, Nicosia, 2012. Waiting room of the unused airport. Photo from The Green Line series. Copyright Heinrich Völkel/Ostkreuz.

Fig. 3
Heinrich Völkel: *Pitargou, Cyprus (South)*, 2012. School building of the abandoned Turkish-Cypriot village of Pitargou. Photo from The Green Line series. Copyright Heinrich Völkel/ Ostkreuz.

to the material turns images of non-pictorial realities into documentation'.[9] He conducts field research by capturing places, perspectives and motifs of a topographical border. A single photograph does not seem to do this justice. The images document a moment and, following Barthes, are a repetition of 'what has been'.[10] In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes the past tense of what is shown:

> *The Photograph is an extended, loaded evidence – as if it caricatured not the figure of what it represents (quite the converse) but its very existence. The image, says phenomenology, is an object-as-nothing. Now, in the Photograph, what I posit is not only the absence of the object; it is also, by one and the same movement, on equal terms, the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it.*[11]

9 Renate Wöhrer, 'Die Kunst des Dokumentierens. Zur Genealogie der Kategorie "dokumentarisch"', in *Beyond evidence. Das Dokument in den Künsten,* ed. Daniela Hahn (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 45-57.
10 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections of Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 85.
11 Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 115.

In Völkel's photograph, the past is doubly present: there is the moment of the photograph in which the classroom was used as a cattle shed and the reference to a more distant past of the classroom as a place of teaching and educating Turkish children. Völkel refers to two periods: before and since the division of Cyprus.

The ambivalent character of 'green borders'

Can a border be everywhere? Border studies since the 1990s have called for a transition from a geopolitical to a biopolitical definition of borders, according to which the focus shifts to people and their perception. Biopolitical borders demand a pluralised view, as Nick Vaughan-Williams, for example, puts it: '[B]orders are not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives'.[12] Especially when it comes to topographies, borders are a difficult phenomenon to depict, but a fascinating one, as they consist more of practices than of motifs. And yet in art we see the motifs of built architecture, such as walls and fences as well as green borders, such as mountains and seas that are also international borders.

In the history of art, the pictorial beauty of landscapes is usually a sign of aesthetic, romantic and sublime observations that offer an impression of nature. The invisibility of borders in landscape images reinforces their ambivalent character and implies the political utilisation of nature. When looking at the pictures, the apparent naturalness of 'green borders' is disturbed, as the art reveals political borders in natural settings as constructions. In other words, a border only becomes visible in its function as such in connection with the idea of traversing it. In the case of Cyprus, Heinrich Völkel's works show that transfer and exchange across the border has been at a standstill for decades.

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12 Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics. The Limits of Sovereign Power* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2009), 1.

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Odyssey of oblivion: a chronicle of displacement from the Kerkennah Islands

Rim Hermessi

Was not the earth of God spacious enough
for you to emigrate therein? [1]

Since 2020, I have frequented Kerkennah Islands – my mother's homeland – to document illegal migrants' attempts to reach Europe and follow the traces of their journeys. As destitution drove migrants to a distant shore, the archipelago became a harbour for human trafficking and corpses tainted its beaches with the stench of death.[2]

The Kerkennah Islands

The Kerkennah Islands, located off the coast of Tunisia, have gained notoriety as a transit point for illegal immigration. African migrants converge here, united in the pursuit of a better life in Italy or Malta along the Central Mediterranean route (CMR).[3] The CMR

1 Quran. 'Surah An-Nisa [The Women] 4:97', in *The Qu'ran: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning,* ed. and trans. Saheeh International (1997).
2 For more on this tragic pattern, see 'Four bodies recovered off Tunisia following migrant boat accident', 2022, accessed 15 May 2024, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/45687/four-bodies-recovered-off-tunisia-following-migrant-boat-accident; 'Tunisia: Navy recovers seven bodies from Mediterranean Sea', 2023, accessed 15 May 2024, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/51170/tunisia-navy-recovers-seven-bodies-from-mediterranean-sea; 'Tunisia recovers around 210 bodies of migrants', 2023, accessed 15 May 2024, https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/48625/tunisia-recovers-around-210-bodies-of-migrants.
3 Liska Wittenberg, *Managing Mixed Migration: The Central Mediterranean Route to Europe* (New York: International Peace Institute 2017).

claims hundreds of lives each year, accounting for more than 90 per cent of deaths in the Mediterranean in 2016.[4] Tunisia is bearing the brunt of this tragedy, with 729 deaths in 2023. The majority of which occurred off the coasts of Sfax (349) and Kerkennah (140).[5]

A different view on migration

Being from the island, it has always held a primal allure for me. I envision it as a place of genesis where generations of mothers reach back to the source: the first mother and universal woman. Instinctively, the only compelling commentary on what was taking place on its shores lay in the voices and experiences of women.

And while the hardship of the crossing is shared by all who attempt it, the gender-based vulnerability makes it riskier for women, who make up half the world's refugees and are disproportionately susceptible to abuse. UN statistics reveal that 60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths occur in humanitarian settings, and an estimated one in five refugee or displaced women have endured sexual violence.[6]

Personal narratives in the form of documentary photography have helped tackle migration issues. Images of people with distinct names and faces, crying mothers in the chaos of capsized vessels and lifeless babies washing ashore next to striped parasols are potent tools for fundraising and policy-reform appeals. But is there a different approach in the same medium, one that would resonate with equal force? My work explores the narratives beyond immediate emotional effects. The focus shifts from 'the displaced woman' as a singular entity to the concept of displacement and how women actually experience it. These faceless figures embody the collective experience, and the lack of identification reflects the marginalisation that migrants face as their identities are replaced with the 'Migrant Persona'.

Imperfections as narrative

Analogue photography is the medium that gives this project its voice. Shot primarily in the Kerkennah Islands, the work embraces the imperfections inherent in 35mm film. Scratches, light leaks, missing frames, faded hues and occasional blurs all complement the themes of absence that permeate the narrative.

4 'Tunisia's Kerkennah Islands: A land for smuggling', *The New Arab*, 2018, accessed 2 June 2024, https://www.newarab.com/analysis/tunisias-kerkennah-islands-land-smuggling.

5 Riman Abouelhassan, *Middle East and North Africa: Migrants Deaths* [sic] *and Disappearances in 2023*, (United Nations Migration, IOM, 2024).

6 'Women refugees and migrants', UN Women, accessed 30 June 2024, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-refugees-and-migrants.

Further amplifying this concept are deliberate technical and chemical manipulations. Double and triple exposures, premature stops, bleaching, burning, etc. emphasise erosion and erasure, implying a sense of discontinuity. This exploration extends beyond the captured image. Collage and textual footnotes are also visual elements suggesting that absences define the Mediterranean as a fluid border.

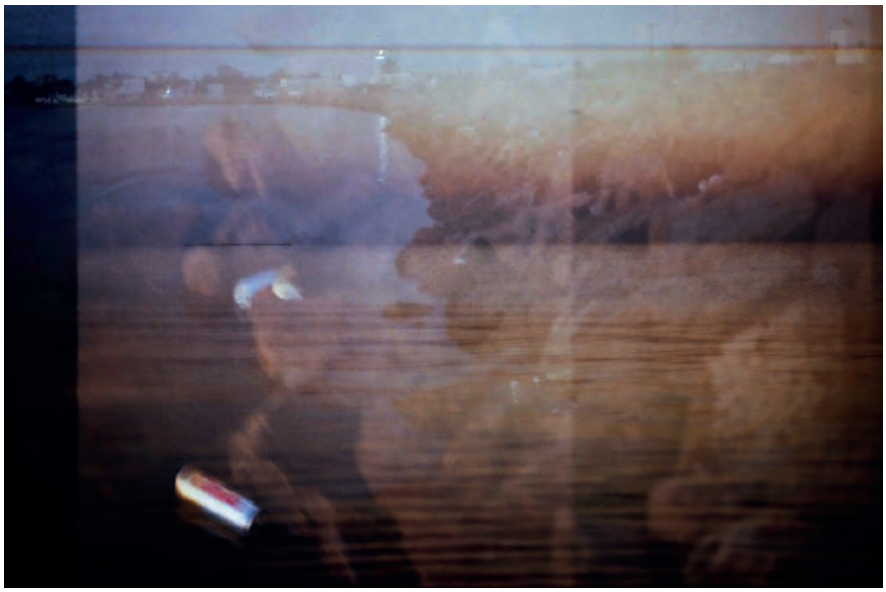
My aim is to transcend mere documentation, for it is insufficient to understand the psychological complexities of flight. I aspire to unveil and reimagine the feminine migration journey from the islands where I took the photographs. In four chapters, each echoing a specific location, emotional state and pivotal step in this odyssey, the narrative unfolds in a linear fashion, mimicking a traveller's physical journey. A fixed point of departure contrasts with the open-ended unknown in every clandestine voyage.

Chapter 1
LAND: SCENES FROM THE ISLAND

The first chapter depicts the point of departure. Earthy tones dominate the scenes, evoking a sense of connection to one's roots. These are not the perfect vistas commonly associated with Kerkennah, the vibrant tourist destination. Instead, the focus shifts to the marginalised scenery, easily overlooked by those seeking the allure of orange sunsets and glistening waters. Here, amidst the seemingly ordinary, lies the hidden face of the place that bears the invisible scars of human exodus.

Vast, empty and abandoned spaces (figure 1) symbolise the vacancy that coexists with the buzz on the island. They underscore the duality of presence and absence, the actual scarcity and perceived abun-

Fig. 1
Rim Hermessi: *Abandoned car*, Kerkennah (2020)
35mm colour film, digital scan



dance, and reflect the substitution of the land's fertility with aridity.

Double and triple exposures (figure 2) are visual metaphors to convey coexisting yet contrasting realities. The serene island life, steeped in tradition and governed by the quotidian rhythms, contrast with the 'criminal' world that emerges mainly after dark.

Any sense of belonging is fleeting, a mirage shimmering in the desert. The land offers no solace, no promise of a future. This chapter serves not as a haven but as a crucible to steel travellers for the journey.

Chapter 2
WATER: FIRST CONTACT WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN

The second chapter explores what it means to be a woman on such a journey. This overflows with a feminine presence. The concept of vessel-like entities is explored through the philosophy

Fig. 2
Rim Hermessi: *Shore*, Kerkennah (2021)
35mm colour film, digital scan

Fig. 3
Rim Hermissi: *Woman chained*, Kerkennah (2021)
35mm colour film, digital scan

of inner and outer spaces. The outward journey is mirrored by the physical vessel, the ship, braving the elements. The inward journey is embodied by the female form, a vessel carrying the weight of the unknown (figure 3). Both journeys converge towards a shared destination.

I have further manipulated some film. Bleaching, for example, dissolves colour so that the bleached area appears white in the negative and black in the print (figure 4). This erasure reinforces the theme of absence, exploring the transit from a place where the migrant was once present to a void through a visual metaphor for disappearance. Infiltrating a new space blends into the act of vanishing from the old one. The profound loss created by these journeys is often overlooked. The physical absence from one's home, the replacement of familiarity with fear and estrangement, the emotional void left behind for loved ones and the silencing of the harrowing migrant experiences all add another layer of absence. Migration itself becomes a catalyst for absence, the severing of ties to surroundings and social connections is a journey into a liminal space, a state of being neither here nor there. The origin leaves an echo in memory even after physical departure. It is not merely a geographic point but a nexus of experiences, emotions and histories.

While tension and anxiety permeate this chapter, the island is not as gloomy as the journey would suggest. Those not compelled to

Fig. 4
Rim Hermessi: *Bleached away*, Kerkennah (2021)
35mm colour film, digital scan (Post processing: bleaching of the negative)

Fig. 5
Rim Hermessi: *Postcard series*, Kerkennah (2021), 35mm colour film, digital scan

escape experience its vibrancy and charm with postcard-worthy sunsets and sunrises (figure 5).

Not all enjoy that luxury. Postcolonial conditions, exploitation and discriminatory migration policies condemn entire regions to cycles of poverty and deprivation. For many women, the island could never be anything more than a sojourn. Philosophical meditations on absence take on a new dimension when juxtaposed with the harsh reality of the Mediterranean as a colonial sea.[7] Gaps and voids are geo-politically relevant, defining the experience of those who traverse it.

Chapter 3
PILGRIMAGE: THE JOURNEY WITHIN AND AT SEA

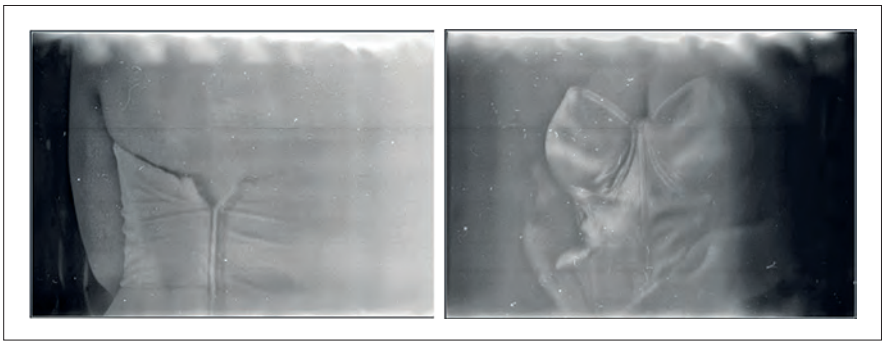
Traversing the central Mediterranean can take several days. This section examines the heart of the voyage. Fully in black and white, it reflects the sacred nature of this transformation as a testament of faith and resilience. Each soul will emerge renewed, irrevocably altered and absolved.

Black-and-white photography detaches itself from reality by stripping away vibrant hues, and it feels surreal because we experience the world in colour. But in this narrative, such detachment is necessary for the metaphor to sink in. We witness not the singular struggle of one migrant, nor a solitary woman's plight. Instead, this chapter is about a cluster of migrant women from several backgrounds aiming at the same end. Therefore, we must transcend individual journeys, aiming instead for a global phenomenon encompassing the full range of roles women play from daughter to mother and everything in between (figure 6).

The narrative embraces intentional light leaks while

Fig. 6
Rim Hermessi: *Mother and Son* (2022), Black & white 35 mm film, digital scan

7 M. Borutta, & S. Gekas, 'A Colonial Sea: the Mediterranean', 1798–1956. *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* (2012).



photographing, mimicking water effects (figure 7). Fragmented portrayals of the female form are deliberate, as their sum may allow reconstruction of the body that once left the shore.

The experience and the tragedy remain obscure from the outside, but we yet hope that the vessels reach their destination whole (figure 8).

Fig. 7
Rim Hermessi: *Parts of a sum* (2021), Black & white 35 mm film. Intentional light leaks, digital scan (in-camera processing, light leaking).

Fig. 8
Rim Hermessi: *Sum of parts* (2021), Black & white 35 mm film. Intentional light leaks, digital scan (in-camera processing, light leaking).

Fig. 9
Rim Hermessi: *Blouse on shore*, Kerkennah (2021), 35mm colour film, digital scan.

Fig. 10
Rim Hermessi: *Gaze* (2022), 35mm colour film, digital scan.

Chapter 4
THE GREAT BEYOND: ARRIVAL OR LACK THEREOF

The seemingly straightforward concept of arrival gains complexity on this trip. What does this hard-won destination signify for the individual? And for those lost at sea, claimed by the fear that haunted their journey, arrival is a grim fulfilment of prophecy. How do the adventurer and the observer grasp this notion (figure 9)?

From the European perspective, the Mediterranean remains a

frontier, a line dividing 'us' from 'them'.[8] Eurocentric narratives paint the region with a broad brush, privileging the protection-worthy global North over the struggling South. This fosters not only the erasure of entire cultures through continued colonial marginalisation, but also a stark dichotomy in the perception of the same absence, referring to the migrants' absence as well as that of the destination's inhabitants.

Even in the celebrated kind of arrival, a disquieting truth lingers. Crossing this fluid border disorients identity, expanding beyond measure the emotional rift caused by the severance of intimate ties with land, people and perhaps life itself (Fig. 10).

This project began as a personal odyssey, a quest to grasp the complexities of womanhood, the trauma of displacement and the resilience of the migrant spirit. I sought to illuminate, through the lens of femininity, secret journeys across the Mediterranean Sea (Fig. 11). Ultimately, however, the exploration raised more questions than answers.

Yet a single question persists. And it is essential. And it is relentless: Where did she go? And what should we do about it?

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Picturing the sea of absence

Florian Bachmeier

In my work as a documentary photographer, particularly in my reports on refugees and their escape and migration routes from the Mediterranean and the war in Ukraine, I have consistently explored the theme of absence. Initially perhaps unconsciously, and later more deliberately, this concept became a central motif. Photography is a powerful tool, capable of evoking profound emotional reactions and shaping narrative discourses. As a medium, photography has an inherently intimate relationship with the concept of absence. Absence in photography refers to the deliberate omission or lack of elements in an image that one might ordinarily expect to find. This approach can serve various conceptual purposes and is intentionally used to achieve a specific effect. By omitting certain elements, photographers can amplify the significance of the objects that are present, guiding the viewer's perception. Absence in photography thus also fulfils a narrative function. In documentary photography, for instance, the absence of people in a place that would usually be bustling with activity can powerfully comment on social, political and emotional states. This absence can evoke feelings of isolation, loss and emptiness, prompting deeper reflection. It serves as a blank space, a hint of what is not visible in the image. It challenges viewers to think about the unseen and the unspoken. The blank space metaphorically represents absence or what is past and transient. Absence in photography creates a potent aesthetic impact. The presence of absence is, in a sense, the full stop, the 'sudden awakening' in the sense of Roland Barthes,[1] in many of my photographs.

1 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections of Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

Fig. 1
Florian Bachmeier: The horizon stretches across the sea off Lesbos Island, embodying the profound absence left behind by those who once sought refuge on its shores. Lesbos, Greece, 2017.

Since my stays and travels to the hotspots of the so-called 'refugee crisis' in the Mediterranean, I have been deeply engaged with these concepts as a photographer. Through my images from places like Idomeni, the transit camp in northern Greece, the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, warehouses in the Serbian capital Belgrade, refugee shelters in Bulgaria and the Spanish enclave Ceuta on the African continent, I strive to document and analyse absences. Absence here is not only the physical lack of something but also the emotional, social and cultural void created by flight, displacement and migration.

The meaning of absence

Absence, at its core, is a state or feeling of lack. When one considers the inhumane conditions in the camps, this lack or absence, the shattered hopes and the associated pain become particularly visible. The absence or loss of home, security, family, belonging and identity. In the worst cases, it is the absence of any hope. These absences are tangible and experiential both

physically and psychologically. Photography can capture and depict these absences profoundly.

I think of the emptiness and hopelessness in the eyes of many individuals portrayed and the bleak, chaotic landscapes of camps like Idomeni or Moria, which seem to gnaw like festering wounds at their surroundings. Pieces of torn clothing on barbed wire fences and other obstacles, faded photographs of those left behind or deceased, abandoned belongings left by those who had no choice but to leave their previous lives behind. Possessions lost on the run or hoarded in a drenched tent. Traces of escape through hostile territory. Motifs that represent and symbolically condense absence, repeating themselves in varied yet similar forms, becoming a constant that runs through the situation of refugees and their flight.

Susan Sontag argued that images, photographs, have the power to haunt us and elicit emotional reactions, something pure narrative storytelling often fails to achieve.[2] She describes the haunting quality of photographs that penetrate deeply into our consciousness, compelling us to reflect on what we see. I hope that my images from these camps and of the people I have been able to accompany on their journeys will ultimately serve not just as mere records but as windows into the reality of these people who otherwise remain largely invisible. They hopefully challenge

2 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973).

Fig. 2
Florian Bachmeier: Amid the barbed wire and bleak surroundings of Idomeni camp, the absence of certainty and stability hangs heavily over the refugees waiting at the closed border. Idomeni, Greece, 2016.

Fig. 3
Florian Bachmeier: Empty blankets and drenched sleeping bags, painting a poignant picture of absence in the heart of the refugee camp. Idomeni, Greece, 2016.

viewers to confront the harsh reality of refugees and their flight, grasping the intolerable absences that shape their lives. Perhaps photography can thus serve as an alternative, complementary method to highlight, investigate and reflect on such dissociations and absences.

Traditional sociological investigations rely on empirical and quantitative methods to collect and analyse data. But do these methods capture the deeper emotional and psychological dimensions of these existential human experiences? Here, photography as a medium can be a valuable complement. It can make the invisible visible, showing gaps and voids created by absences and document them.

Camps like Idomeni or Moria are places where absence is omnipresent. The people who have to live in these camps have fled their home countries to escape war, persecution and poverty. They have left everything behind – houses, apartments, possessions.

Often, they have lost loved ones. They have often experienced the unspeakable, carrying deep traumas with them. Arriving in one of these camps, they find themselves in a sort of limbo, a space between the past they have left behind and a future that remains uncertain. Many images from these contexts, including my own, depict people living in cramped spaces under often unbearable conditions, in cold, in extreme heat, without access to vital and basic services, without access to clean water, food and basic medical care.

Absences in refugee camps and other locations along migration routes refer pragmatically but primarily to the lack of resources necessary for a commodious life. There is often no medical care, injuries often remain untreated or are inadequately treated, chronic illnesses go untreated, and the lack of psychological support exacerbates the trauma many refugees have experienced and suffered. On migration routes and in camps, there is also a constant, often life-threatening lack of security. Extreme cold, constant rain and the outbreak of a fire like in Moria often have

Fig. 4
Florian Bachmeier: In the dim confines of a Belgrade warehouse, traumatised refugee Mohammed washes in freezing temperatures, the stark absence of safety and home evident in his solitary ritual. Belgrade, Serbia, 2017.

catastrophic consequences. Violence, abuse and exploitation are widespread. Security forces, where present, are often unable to adequately protect the residents. Women and children are particularly at risk and often suffer from sexual harassment and abuse. The sanitary conditions in the camps and informal settlements along migration routes are often catastrophic. There is no sanitation. As previously mentioned, there is a lack of professional psychosocial support and networks to provide mutual support. Conflicts between people of different nationalities often occur. All this exacerbates the burdens refugees already face. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety disorders.

These absences have serious impacts on individuals and communities. They undermine human dignity and worsen the already precarious living conditions of refugees and those in flight. In some of my photographs, I depict the architecture of makeshift, hastily erected shelters that often provide no protection. I show people who have to live in hiding, who must remain invisible. I show their sparse meals, their torn clothes, their injuries, the effects of violence and the hardships they endured during their escape. There are images of blankets, drenched sleeping bags, camps in inhospitable areas, pictures of worn-out children's shoes – a sad reminder of a childhood denied to the wearers of these shoes, likely to remain thus. Images that tell of a lives in a constant state of emergency in the sense of Giorgio Agamben,[3] particularly relevant in this context and these places: a situation where seemingly normal laws and rights are suspended in response to a crisis, creating a space where human rights are systematically suspended. Especially the camps exist in a state of lawlessness, operating as legal grey zones, and this state of emergency has long become the norm.

Ideally, images evoke emotional reactions – this, at least, is my hope and drive as a photographer – and make the absence of normality, of safety palpable. They hopefully speak a clear language and show the deep scars caused by this life on the run. Can photographs, as visual stimuli, evoke affective responses? Can they compel viewers to engage with the situations they depict, to connect with the people in these images? Images are a bridge between viewers and refugees, who are otherwise only perceived as abstract numbers in statistics.

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The shore of humanity

Jonathan Jonsson

This article shows how the Mediterranean Sea became a symbol for involuntary exile and the war-time disintegration of reality in the works of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.[1] Endlessly rolling waves express the uncertain and undulating lives of Palestinians exiled from their native soil. A horizon without land illustrates the inability of the displaced and traumatised to visualise a future. Rejecting this disintegration, Darwish used poetry to turn the sea of exile into a space of agency and re-creation.

This analysis builds on my previous phenomenological analysis of Palestinian literature.[2] I also draw on mediaeval Arabic philosophy and Anette Månsson's work[3] to show how Darwish uses language to construct a new world out of chaos, making sense of his frequent allusions to religious and historical texts. In his poetry, Darwish employs what historian Peter Burke calls a 'polyphonic

Fig. 1
A young Mahmoud Darwish in Cairo. (Photo: Al Akbar)

1 Maḥmūd Darwīš (1941 – 2008). I use the standard transliteration 'Mahmoud Darwish' throughout this article.

2 I have previously explored the experience of time and the body in the work Dhākira li-l-nisyān by Darwish, which informs this article. See Jonathan Jonsson, 'The Music of Human Flesh: The Lived Time and Body of Exile in Ḏākira li-l-nisyān by Maḥmūd Darwīš' (MA University of Oslo, 2022), https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/101155; Jonathan Jonsson, 'Ord är ett hemland!', Babylon 23, no. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.5617/ba.11498; Jonathan Jonsson, 'Nakbans epistemologi', Kamilla Østerberg and Henrik Wathne eds. Salongen, *Norsk Tidsskriftforening*, 27 May 2024, https://www.salongen.no/artikkel/israel-palestina-konflikten/krig/204866.

3 This essay would not have been possible without Anette Månsson, 'Passage to a new wor(l)d: Exile and restoration in Mahmoud Darwish's writings 1960-1995' (PhD Uppsala University, 2003), 161-84, 217-32.

history',[4] oscillating between the distant and near, the foreign and known. The story of Palestine is both ancient and modern, sacred and profane, narrated by contrasting but interwoven voices. Passages from the Torah, the Gospels and the Quran as well as Mesopotamian and Greek myth echo synchronously in his poetry.[5]

In September of 1982, Mahmoud Darwish was forced to cross the Mediterranean: a displacement painful enough to tear his world into pieces. For 10 years, he had lived in Beirut, a city he came to love. The Lebanese capital had been home to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees since their forced expulsion in 1948, when the state of Israel was established. In addition to housing refugees, Beirut had become the cultural capital of Palestinian intellectuals in exile as well as the base of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This Palestinian presence was perceived as a threat by certain Lebanese groups. In 1975, tension between Lebanese Christian militias and Palestinian armed groups exploded into violence, triggering a 15-year civil war.[6] Israel was one of several foreign powers that intervened, eventually launching a full-scale invasion, besieging Beirut in the summer of 1982. For seven weeks, the city was bombarded from sea, air and land. Thousands of civilians died, and the city's scars remain visible today.

In August, Israel attained their goal. The PLO fled the city. Mahmoud Darwish followed them to Tunisia in September. The siege was an apocalyptic event for the poet, and he experienced the final departure as the end of his world. In his autobiographical *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* (Memory for Forgetfulness) from 1986,[7] Darwish uses the Mediterranean as a symbol of existential nothingness, the final frontier of total emptiness stretching out in front of the displaced person, offering no visible future. He compares the ships full of Palestinians leaving Beirut to the biblical flood:

> *And in a short while, we shall travel to it [the sea], in the modern ships of Noah, to a blueness that leads to an unending whiteness, that reveals no shore. Where to.. Where in the ocean will the ocean take us?*[8]

4 Peter Burke, 'The historian's dilemma: Domestication or foreignizing?', in *History as a Translation of the Past: Case Studies from the West*, ed. Luigi Alonzi (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 102.

5 Darwish considered it his right as a Palestinian to live in all these cultures, to let all these voices from his homeland speak to him. In opposition to Zionist discourse, he maintained that he had this right since he was not a stranger to the land. See Mahmoud Darwish, 'Maḥmūd Darwīš li-l-Wasaṭ: Min ḥaqq al-shiʿr iʿlān al-hazīma', *Al-Wasaṭ* 1995, 54.

6 Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 189.

7 Mahmoud Darwish, 'Al-zamān: Bayrūt / Al-makān: Āb', *Al-Karmel*, no. 21-22 (1986). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by the author with assistance from Raghad Abu Shaker.

8 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 95. The double periods are from the original Arabic text. Darwish uses them when he wants the reader to take a slight pause, or when he wants to emphasise a point, as if he were reading a poem and pausing slightly. This is opposed to single periods and ellipses (...), which are more used for thoughts trailing off. Darwish is first and foremost a poet, and he also brings creative use of puntuation to his prose.

Dhākira li-l-nisyān describes one day in August during the height of the siege, when the Israeli forces unleashed all available firepower on the city in order to compel a surrender. In the fractured and fragmented book, part autobiography, part prose poem, part intertextual experiment, the reader enters Darwish's mind as the world dissolves around him. Eventually, he accepts that despite all steadfastness and refusal, he will have to surrender to the sea. As he goes to bed at the end of the day, the final words of the book are:

> *The sea walks in the streets. The sea hangs from the windows and the branches of dried out trees. The sea descends from the sky and enters the room. Blue.. White.. Foam.. Waves. I do not love the sea.. I do not want the sea, because I do not see a shore, or a dove. I do not see anything in the sea except the sea. I do not see a shore. I do not see a dove.*[9]

In Genesis 8:11, Noah waits for a dove to return with a sign that there is once again land above the water. In referencing the biblical flood, Darwish is watching the horizon, seeing only more water. No shore. No dove.

The imagery of the flood does more than describe his sense of dislocation. All the world seems turned into water, even the windows and the branches of trees. Darwish belonged to a generation raised on the ideals of Arab nationalism, which included the promise of a future in which the postcolonial Arab nation-states would come together, eventually liberating Palestine.

This dream faded slowly and painfully in the latter half of the 20th century. The United Arab Republic of Syria and Egypt ended in 1961 after only three years. Israel won a major victory in 1967, shocking the Arab world and inciting the ongoing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. In 1979, Egypt signed a peace agreement with Israel. The Lebanese Civil War was the final blow to the dream of unity, as Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese factions fell on each other in overlapping conflicts and brutal massacres. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon during this civil war is characterised by literary scholar Stephan Guth as the 'total collapse of all hope'[10] among Arabic intellectuals.

Under this flood lay the mutilated remains of the hopes and ideals on which Darwish was raised. The truths that structured his old reality had slowly fractured over the previous two decades, cleaving his world. In 1982, he found himself in an unfamiliar world where all ideals seemed hollow, and all structure was lost. All that

9 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 96.
10 Stephan Guth, 'Novel, Arabic', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online*, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014). https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27115.

remained was the chaos of foaming waves, tossing him around without the promise of a shore or a dove.

However, a cosmic flood is not merely an end. The waters also carry the seeds of a new world. Like the roaring primordial chaos in mythologies around the world, his sea contained the potential for creation.[11] For Darwish, this was only possible if intellectuals finished the job of dismantling the old world. Meditating on the role of writers in times of war in Dhākira li-l-nisyān, he writes:

> *It is fitting that we honour the awe which these hours are unfolding, the hours in which human existence is transferred from one shore to another, and from one time (ṭawr) to another. And it is fitting that old poetry knows how to be silent in humility in the presence of this newborn. And if it is necessary for intellectuals, or some of them, to turn into sharpshooters, then let them endeavour to shoot their old concepts, questions, and morals.*[12]

The word *ṭawr* can mean a time period, but also a state or phase of being. The collapse of a time and a movement from shore to shore is also a shift in the fundamental structure of lived reality. Throughout his creative dismantling of the old world, Darwish held his silence, unable to write poetry during the siege. However, he promised to one day go back to writing poetry:

> *When the guns quiet down a bit. When I unleash (ʾufajjir) my silence, which is full of all these voices. When I find my adequate language.*[13]

The word *ʾufajjir* also means to bombard or to explode – his silence would one day be his way to return fire. When land rose from the waves of the sea, Darwish knew that he would find a budding language in the graveyard of old poetry, concepts, questions and ethics. In a poem written shortly after his departure from Beirut in September of 1982, *Hymn to the Rising Shadow* (1983), the first-person character has a conversation with a voice that repeatedly asks him, 'What are you looking for, young man, in the broken boat of the Odyssey?'[14] He answers, 'For a wave that I lost in the sea'. The voice asks him if the migrant does indeed find a wave. The reply is (my emphasis):

> *The migrant finds a wave that has drowned and brings it with him.*
> *A sea for you to live in, or to be lost.*
> *A sea for the new September or the return of the four seasons.*

11 See Månsson, 'Passage to a new wor(l)d', 220-21.
12 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 35.
13 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 34.
14 Mahmoud Darwish, *Madīḥ aẓ-ẓill al-ʿālī* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿawda, 1983), 108.

*A sea in front of you, **in you**, a sea behind you.*[15]

Unlike Odysseus, Darwish is denied a *nostos*, the heroic journey home. Instead of returning to Palestine, he is plunged further into the sea, on the broken boat of the Odyssey, with nothing but sea in front of and behind him. However, by absorbing the sea into him, 'a sea to live in' that reaches into his being, he can seize a drowned wave and to bring it back to shore. His only weapon to do this is the Word.

In *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*, the reader follows Darwish as he navigates the streets of Beirut in the morning, with artillery shells raining around him. He captures the moments before rebirth and re-creation, describing a disintegrating world:

> *The waves have married the moss of a rock on a distant shore, and I have just emerged from this marriage which has lasted for a million years. I have just emerged, but I did not know where I was. I did not know who I was. I did not know what my name was, nor the name of this place. I did not know that I had the capacity to tear out one of my ribs in order to discover a dialogue against this absolute silence. What is my name, and who named me? Who will name me: Adam!*[16]

The power to name someone Adam is traditionally reserved for the Creator. This right passes unto man in Genesis 2:19, where Adam is tasked with naming the animals. Naming is power, and as Månsson notes, '[t]o narrate, write and name is to make the speaker a subject, an act that is of utmost importance to the migrant'.[17]
The rib Darwish tears out of his own body could be an allusion to Eve.[18] In this paper, however, I read his rib as a form of embodied pen. His own living body becomes the source of a new dialogue, one written against the madness of war, one with the potential for creation.[19] This theme is reinforced by an excerpt that directly follows the question 'Who is going to call me Adam?' from the introduction to the historical work *Al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh* by mediaeval writer Ibn al-Athīr (1160 - 1233 CE).[20] In the excerpt, Ibn al-Athīr engages with various transmissions from the Prophet (*ḥadīth*) in order to establish the order in which God formed the elements of creation; the Pen (*al-qalam*), the Tablet (*al-lawḥ*), the

15 Darwish, *Madīḥ aẓ-ẓill al-ʿālī*, 108-09.
16 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 22.
17 Månsson, 'Passage to a new wor(l)d', 211.
18 Thank you to Ben Kamis for this observation. Reading the rib as Eve works well with an analysis by Stephan Milich, in which a concern of Darwish's poetry is to encounter the fe/male Other in the mirror, often in the form of the recurring Jewish lover. See Stephan Milich, 'Maḥmūd Darwīsh; A Plurality of Voices for Invoking the Other', in *A Companion to World Literature*, ed. Ken Seigneurie (Toronto: J. Wiley & Sons, 2019).
19 For a deeper analysis of the interface between the living body, text and the world, see Jonsson, 'The Music of Human Flesh', 47-54.
20 Darwish, 'Al-zamān', 22-23.

Throne (*al-ʿarsh*), water (*al-māʾ*), etc. These elements all occur in the Quran, in verses such as 11:7, where God is:

ءٓاَمَلۡاٗ ىلَعَ ۥُهشُرۡعَ نَاكَوَ ۚمٍايَّأَ ةِتَّسِ ىفِ ضَرۡأَلۡاَوَ تِٰوَٰمَسَّلۡاٗ قَلَخَ ىذِلَّاٗ وَهُوَ

He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His Throne was on the water…

In *Dhākira li-l-nisyān*, the excerpt begins in the middle of Ibn al-Athīr's discussion about the Pen:[21] 'Then God created, after [creating] the Pen and commanding it (*ʾamarahu*) so that it wrote all that exists until the Day of Resurrection, a fine mist…'[22] This is followed by alternative theories on the order of creation.

The intertext is never explained in the work. It could simply be one example of collapsing time. *Al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh* contains lengthy description of the crusades, told by the contemporary Ibn al-Athīr. By weaving this into a narrative on modern Beirut, Darwish creates a polyphonic history where the crusades appear to be ongoing in the streets of Beirut in 1982, fusing the madness and violence of past and present.

However, this passage does something more. Discussing the order in which God formed the elements of creation through his verbal command is also a discussion on narration and emplotment of the world. I follow the theologians and philosophers Imām al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and al-ʿĀmirī (d. 992) who read Quranic elements such as the Pen and Tablet as symbolising metaphysical moments of creation. The Pen, corresponding to Intellect (*voũς*) in Neoplatonic philosophy, writes the cosmos into being following the command (*ʾamr*) of God, the Aristotelian first cause.[23] This *λόγος*, the Word of God, issued from His Throne (*al-ʿarsh*), is inscribed upon the Table (*al-lawḥ*). According to al-Ghazālī, this Preserved Table, on which all of Being is inscribed, analogous to the Neoplatonic World Soul, is what prophets access directly in moments of inspiration (*ilhām*).[24] Seeing the Table means witnessing the truth that ontologically precedes our lower plane of existence. Being follows divine writing-into-being onto this Table – creation is this Word incarnate.

This is the power metaphorically seized by Darwish. He goes beyond the divine gift of naming objects. Instead, he demands the right to name himself, turning himself into a creator. His torn-out rib becomes a pen with which he can inscribe a new cosmic

21 See e.g. Quran 96:4-5 for an example of the Quranic Pen.
22 ʿIzz al-Dīn Abu-l-Ḥasan, *ʿAlī Ibn al-Aṯīr, Al-kāmil fī al-tārīẖ, al-muǧallad al-ʾūla* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt li-l-ṭibāʿa wa-l-našr, 1960), 16.
23 Elvira Wakelnig, *Feder, Tafel, Mensch: Al-ʿĀmirīs Kitāb al-fuṣūl fī l-maʿālim al-ilāhīya und die arabische Proklos-Rezeption im 10. Jh. Islamic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 160-61.
24 Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Die Wunder des Herzens*, trans. Adel El Domiaty (Braunschweig: Adel El Domiaty, 2022), 74.

order upon his own table, reforming the world through discourse.[25] If the shattered world of Beirut lay formless and empty,[26] then the poetry of Darwish was the spirit hovering over the surface of the sea, ready also to grant the power of naming to whoever would hear and follow him. In his *Hymn to the Rising Shadow*, he tells the listener:

> *Take what remains of you, take me on as a helper in the presence of the ruins. Take*
> *A flaming*
> *Dictionary*
> *And triumph!*
> ...
> *And triumph at the end of history!*[27]

Even if history met an end in Beirut, the fragmented words remaining under the flood, the drowned waves ready to be brought to shore, offers not only rebirth, but even triumph.

This book-length poem, *Hymn to the Rising Shadow*, was performed by Darwish at the opening of the Palestinian National Council session in Algiers in February 1983. As I have noted, the PLO was in renewed exile, at a point in history where all hope of liberating Palestine seemed lost. One might have expected the session to be a sombre event, but Darwish read his poetry with a victor's voice. Covered in sweat but smiling warmly, his voice only rose throughout the 80 minutes it took him to read the entire

25 On the porous borders between the lived body, language, and reality in the poetry of Darwish, see Jonsson, 'The Music of Human Flesh', 47-54.
26 *ṯōhū wā-ḇōhū*, see Genesis 1:2.
27 Darwish, *Madīḥ aẓ-ẓill al-ʿālī*, 7-8.

Fig. 2
Waves breaking on the Raouché rocks on the Lebanese shore. (Photo: Zheka Boychenko)

poem.[28] Notables in the audience, including Yasser Arafat, smiled proudly and cheered loudly throughout the performance. For Palestinians, seizing the joy of life after moments of defeat has become an art in itself. Like the murals covering the West Bank wall, creativity is a way for Palestinians to claim their humanity and show pride in the face of occupation and degradation.

In 1995, Darwish explained in an interview that his new poetic calling was to write the history of Troy. By creating a poetry of the vanquished, he could fill the void left in the Greek heritage, where history had only been written by the victors who completed their *nostos*. Paradoxically, he claims, being the poet of Troy makes him appear as a victor:

> *What I mean is that the language of despair is poetically stronger than the language of hope, because there is space in despair to contemplate destiny (*al-maṣīr*), and to survey the shore of humanity, in a way that is not granted the victor. This is because despair is the poetic, psychological, and linguistic ground which brings the poet closer to God, to the essence of things, to the first poetic speech.*[29]

In his poetry, Darwish keeps the hope of recovery after loss alive. To return to the first speech means speaking a new world into existence, transforming the remnants from a life of defeat into triumph with the help of a burning dictionary. He was able to view the shore of humanity from the sea of absolute fragmentation, reclaiming his own threatened existence in the void of exile. With nothing but the sea surrounding him, he was able to build a new world from waves that had drowned. In the current madness of the world, as the burned bodies of children in Gaza make us question humanity, threatening us with a new Flood drowning all meaning and hope, the poetry of Darwish reminds us that while there is any life left, there is reason to hold onto hope.

28 For a video of the performance, see Amor Ben Rhoma, *Mahmūd Darwīsh fī qaṣīdatihi al-malḥamiyya «Madiḥ al-ẓill al-ʿālī» (kāmila)*, 1983 (YouTube, 2020). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1HeUma-EkU .

29 Darwish, 'Maḥmūd Darwīš', 57. For a full analysis of this quote, see Jonsson, 'Ord är ett hemland!', 39.

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Material bleeding: the erasure of Ajami neighbourhood and its evidence on Givat Aliyah/ Jabaliyeh Beach

Tal Hafner

In this essay, I look at expressions of historical erasure in the form of environmental colonialism as it appears in the Ajami neighbourhood and on the Givat Aliyah Beach, which is also known in the local Arab community as Jabaliyeh Beach in the city of Yaffo, also known as Yaffa.

First, some historical background: in 1947 the UN adopted the Partition Plan for Palestine, which certified Israel as an independent state and caused the Israeli War of Independence, known among Palestinians as the Nakba.[1] The city of Yaffo, which is an ancient port city on the Mediterranean shore and one of the most important Arab cities in Palestine, was occupied in 1948. It was annexed to Tel Aviv in 1950 after the war, most of its remaining Arab residents fled their homes while the rest were concentrated in Ajami, an originally Arab neighbourhood, south of the old city walls. Of about 70,000 Palestinian residents, 5000 remained in Yaffo after 1948.

1 For an overview of the social climax before and after 1948 in Palestine/Israel, see Dan Rabinowitz and Daniel Monterescu, 'Reconfiguring the "Mixed Town": Urban Transformations of Ethnonational Relations in Palestine and Israel', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008). For an overview on Jaffa/Tel Aviv and the Jaffa Slope Park specifically, see Naama Meishar, 'UP/ ROOTING: Breaching Landscape Architecture in the Jewish-Arab City', *AJS Review* 41, no. 1 (2017); Ravit Goldhaber, '"The Jaffa Slope Project": An Analysis of "Jaffaesque" Narratives in the New Millennium', *Makan: Adalah's Journal for Land, Planning and Justice* 2, The Right to a Spatial Narrative (2010); Sharon Rotbard, *White City, Black City: Architecture and War in Tel Aviv and Jaffa*, trans. Orit Gat (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

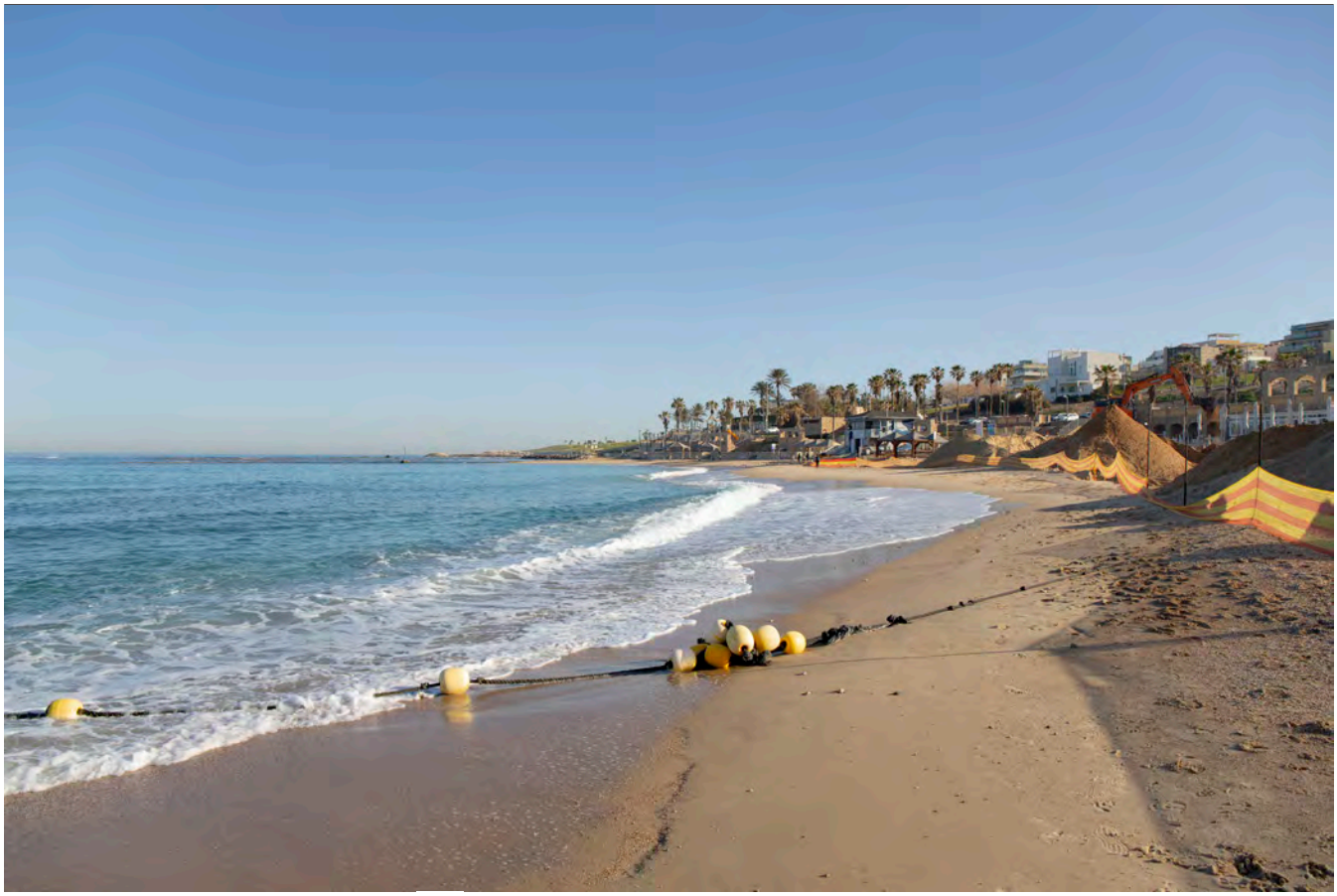

Fig. 1
Givat Aliyah / Jabaliyeh Beach (Image: Tal Hafner)

In 1950 the Absentees' Property Law was passed in the Knesset, declaring that any person who left their property in Israel or Palestine for up to six months from the beginning of the war would generally forfeit their property to the state of Israel.[2] Palestinians who lived in one neighbourhood in Yaffo and were transferred to Ajami had no rights to their homes, neither the old nor the new.

From 1949 to 1992, the municipality of Tel Aviv-Yaffo had Ajami and the adjacent Jabaliyeh neighbourhood marked for demolition and did not issue any permits for construction or renovation.[3] In accordance with the city plan, between 1960–1985 the municipality demolished large parts of Ajami and re-evacuated some of its residents. Jewish immigrants were settled in the remaining empty houses in Ajami upon arrival to the new state and were given the option to move into a *shikkun* apartment block (the 'national housing blocks' of Israel) in the new south-eastern neighbourhoods of Yaffo after the citrus orchards had been uprooted. At the same time, the Arab residents were forced to live in the wreckage and

2 Knesset, 'Absentees' Property Law 5710-1950', (United Nations, 1950). https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209845/.

3 Sebastian Wallerstein, Emily Silverman and Naama Meishar, *Housing Distress within the Palestinian Community of Jaffa: The end of protected tenancy in absentee owership homes* (Technion - Israel Institute of Technology Faculty of Architecture and Planning et al., 2009), 2, https://bimkom.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/Housingdistressjaffa.pdf.

voids of ruined houses until they were 'legally' evicted by various means.[4]

The debris was then dumped on the Ajami coast, accreting into a monstrous district dumping site extending 15 meters above sea level and 200,000 square meters into the sea, which was known as 'the Garbage Mountain'.[5]

In the early 2000s, an environmental protest led to the site being converted into a park called Midron Park/the Jaffa Slope Park/ Mutanazahun Munhader Yaffa, and by 2010 a beautiful landscape obscured the memory of the underlying layers and blocking almost all direct access to the sea in this coastal town that had survived millennia.

Midron Park is not the first case of using greening tactics – a type of environmental colonialism that, in its local Israeli version, turns demolished Palestinian neighbourhoods and villages into

4 There are three typical reasons for eviction: the death of the initial owner or their legal heirs under certain conditions, illegal renovation or construction (which covered every renovation or construction project because no permits were issued), and failure to pay rent (though many tenants were not aware of the process and lost touch with the representatives of the Israel Land Administration that was in charge of collecting it). See Wallerstein, Silverman and Meishar, *Housing Distress*, 2-3.

5 Naama Meishar, 'In search of meta-landscape architecture: the ethical experience of Jaffa Slope Park's design', *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 7, no. 2 (2012): 12 https://doi.org/10.1080/18626033.2012.746086.

Fig. 2
Works done to strengthen the Kurkar ridge above the beach where old Christian and Muslim cemeteries lie. (Image: Tal Hafner)

aestheticised green lungs and national parks for the leisure of the Israeli public.[6] I still couldn't help but wonder – why greening? Why not just erase and be done with it?

According to WJT Mitchel, landscape is primarily a multi-sensory physical medium that encompasses codes of cultural meaning and value. He also states that the imperialistic perception sees 'cultural' and 'civilised' movement into 'natural' landscapes as a 'natural' process, an inevitable historic 'development'.[7] Such movement toward creating the Zionist landscape was based on the concept of 'making the desert bloom' (Hafrahat Hashmama). Another expression of this principle is 'redeeming the land' (Geulat Hakarka), referring to the need to revive the local environment that has been neglected by the other peoples living on this land since the Jews last left about 2000 years ago.[8] The Zionists needed to see the land as almost non-existent so they can turn it into their new homeland.

The notion of 'making the desert bloom' has several potential various historic and cultural sources:

- In the biblical creation myth, on the third day God created the land and then covered it with vegetation, so bare land is incomplete. Generally, the desert is a place of hardship in the Bible, especially Exodus, in which the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt and wandered in the desert for 40 years before arriving to the promised land of Canaan, the land of Israel-to-be.
- Another biblical reference is from Jeremiah, 2:2: 'The word of the Lord came to me: "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:
  'This is what the Lord says:
  "I remember the devotion of your youth,
  how as a bride you loved me
  and followed me through the wilderness,
  through a land not sown."'[9]
- This is Jeremiah conveying God's words to the Israelites in Jerusalem, acknowledging the people's love and commitment to him before arriving in the promised land and surviving all the hardships of the desert.
- A relatively current possible influence is European folklore and (especially German) forest culture. Until Zionism arose in late 19th-century Europe, the Jewish people were without a country or a plan to acquire one, so there was no folklore about it. Then,

6 For more about such green erasure, see the works of Na'ama Meishar as well as Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness: Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948*, trans. Dimi Reider (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).and; 'From Nakba to Return', Zochrot, 2024, accessed 2024, https://www.zochrot.org/welcome/index/en.

7 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Holy Landscape*, ed. Larry Abramson, trans. Rona Cohen (Tel Aviv: Resling 2009), 30, 34.

8 Kadman, *Erased from Space*.

9 'Jeremiah 2:2', in *the Bible (NIVUK)* (BibleGateway). https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%202&version=NIVUK

as talk about migrating to the promised land started, they absorbed pre-existing folklore and appropriated them.[10]

- Another current idea about making the desert bloom connects to a broader Zionist motivation to restore what the Jewish people lacked in their diasporic life. This would include returning to the Promised Land, reviving ancient Hebrew as a modern national language and reappropriating the 'Jewish body that was thought to be weak to break from ascription as 'the people of the book'. There are countless instances of Zionists making the desert bloom while reappropriating their own bodies, gaining strength through the hard labour in the fields.[11] Another hypothesis by Schama is that the tree roots were the Zionists' own metaphorical roots. If exile is desert, Israel should be a forest.[12]
- A further process that coincides with Zionism and has accelerated the greening of the country profusely is the reconceptualisation of the national holiday Tu Bishvat. Tu Bishvat is a date in the Jewish calendar relating to the ripening of the crops that had been negligible. But since the beginning of the 20th century, the Zionist movement has turned it into a national planting holiday, a familial happening of planting all over the country.[13]

All these potential explanations help account for why environmental colonialism was chosen over pure destruction.

Afforestation was one of the first and main actions to take root in this land and green it, taken mainly by the Jewish National Fund, and to this day the JNF is reframing archaeological findings to give them a connection to Jewish ancient history.[14] Most Arab villages in Israel were demolished on purpose, some completely disappeared from the landscape, but almost half of those villages' remains have been included in postwar nature reserves and national parks, greened and unknown to most of the passersby on their Saturday family outings.[15]

Coming back to Yaffo, Ajami and the Park, I had no idea about this history of Yaffo, though I was born in Tel Aviv and had lived there most of my life. Only when I moved to one of those *shikkun* buildings and started visiting Jabaliyeh Beach, which borders the southern part of Midron Park, did I become aware of this history. No, there was no sign, no explanation anywhere, but there was physical material that made me start asking questions.

10 Mitchell, *Holy Landscape*, 72.
11 Haim Kaufman and Yair Galily, 'Sport, Zionism and Ideology', *Social Issues in Israel* 8 (2009).
12 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 14; Mitchell, *Holy Landscape*, 58.
13 Amir Mashiach, 'From Past to Present - An Analysis of the Various Sectors in Modern Israel Based on Jewish Identities from Ancient Times', *Social Issues in Israel* 17 (2014): 53.
14 Kadman, *Erased from Space*, 42, 70.
15 Kadman, *Erased from Space*, 11, 68.

Over my frequent visits to the beach, I eventually noticed something strange: on the sand, mixed with the seashells, lay all this debris of what seemed to be pieces of homes. Some are tiny, some the size of my palm and some bigger, in all shapes and colours and textures, scattered on the beach but definitely not from the sea.

After some physical and theoretical digging, I realised that they came from beneath the park, from what it is still concealing from the time it was the garbage mountain, before it was sterilised and greened. Those pieces were taken by the currents, by nature. They were not dumped there as part of the garbage mountain because, above that section of the coast, blocking the access from the city to the beach, is a Kurkar ridge on which old cemeteries reside that have remained intact since before 1948. These pieces are relics that the park hides – they preserve and recall the absent homes, people, history and culture. They, to this day, carry the city's trauma, because not only bodies bleed; material can bleed too. The environment retains this collective memory of its prior residents, it unearths them, hiding them in plain sight.

My photographs portray some of these pieces from the beach. I can't say for sure whether they are from Ajami, but from what I was able to gather about the architectural history of the neighbourhood, they might be.

Fig. 3
Human debris among natural maritime rocks and shells on the beach. (Image: Tal Hafner)

Though not connected directly, it has become impossible to talk about Jewish-Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict without mentioning Hamas's attack on the Gaza Envelope area on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent Israeli retaliation on Gaza. No greening is happening at the moment, neither as a colonialist tactic nor as a rehabilitation technique; only wreckage, carnage and desperation. Though not symmetrical in scale, human pain and grief are equal anywhere in the world. I wish to end my essay with the hope of peace, freedom and prosperity for all in my homeland and anywhere on this planet.

Fig. 4
Current aerial photo of Yaffo coastline. The cemeteries are on the lower third of the image. Image: Google Maps, 2024.

Fig. 5
A green tile, a fragment of a home, on a beach, part of what was and could still be a paradise. (Image: Tal Hafner)

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Intermarium: Israel between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea

Shaul Marmari

Neighbours[1]

Sirens went off in Eilat on 31 October 2023. Soon after, aerial targets were intercepted off the coast of Israel's southernmost city. The Houthi regime, which controls much of Yemen, subsequently declared that it had attacked Israel in response to the war in Gaza. Since then, the Shiite movement whose slogan calls for 'death to Israel' has launched numerous missile and drone strikes against Eilat, while at the same time targeting civilian ships plying the Red Sea. On 20 July 2024, the Israeli air force retaliated by massively bombing Al-Hudaydah.

The odd conflict between Yemen and Israel exposes a forgotten geopolitical reality that connects these two seemingly unconnected countries. While direct military conflict between countries situated almost 2000 kilometres apart seems inconceivable, the missiles, drones and aircraft that traverse the Red Sea remind us that both countries adjoin a common body of water.

Sharing a sea is more than a geographical detail. After all, water connects more than land does; its surface facilitates movement and allows coastal inhabitants to exchange. Eilat shares not only a landscape with Al-Hudaydah, but also a long history of caravans and dhows that once crisscrossed the region. Today, only traces

1 A longer version of this essay appeared in Hebrew in *Hazman Hazeh* magazine in March 2023 (https://hazmanhazeh.org.il/red-sea).

of these ancient connections remain; the histories of the Bedouin, Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian and Yemeni communities in contemporary Israel evoke old migration routes that antedate the arbitrary borders of nation states.

Yet Israel is seldom associated with the Red Sea. Recently, the slogan 'from the river to the sea' – referring to the Jordan River and the Mediterranean – has brought other aquatic images into the public discourse. It is especially the Mediterranean that has become the cornerstone of Israel's self-understanding. The Red Sea, by contrast, seems out of place. Its relative absence from the collective consciousness renders the conflict between Israel and Yemen almost bizarre.

Was the Red Sea always absent? Must it remain absent? A rough sketch of Israel's historical relation to the Red Sea shows that the southern sea once briefly occupied the Israeli mind before it was eclipsed by other maritime visions. This brief history of emersion and suppression can afford new vistas for the contemporary Israeli imagination.

Strategic sea

On 10 March 1949, during the final stages of the First Arab-Israeli War, soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) raised an impromptu flag over the old British police station in Um al-Rashrash on the Gulf of Aqaba. The iconic photograph of the Ink Flag symbolises the conquest of the territory allocated to the Jewish state by the UN partition plan of 1947. As the forces reached the southernmost point of the newly declared State of Israel, they took control over some 10-kilometre strip of Red Sea coast. Um al-Rashrash would become the site for Israel's only port city on the Red Sea: Eilat.

The Israeli leadership recognised the significance of these territorial gains. Located between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, Israel saw an opportunity to bridge East and West. Israeli leaders let their imagination run riot with ideas about digging a canal to connect both seas – visions that still occasionally resurface.[2] While this fantasy hasn't materialised, access to the Red Sea was immediately perceived as a strategic asset. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, spoke highly of the new route leading from Eilat to South and East Asia, where Israel could make new friends.

Yet Israel's optimistic marine visions confronted a gloomy reality. Israel had to share the Red Sea with Egypt, its then-bitterest enemy, which was seeking regional hegemony. Egypt controlled

2 See, for example, Mordechai Chaziza, 'The Red-Med Railway: New Opportunities for China, Israel, and the Middle East', *Begin-Sadat Center Perspectives* 385 (11 December 2016).

the Straits of Tiran and could close the coveted maritime route leading to Eilat at will. To counter that threat, Israel sought allies around the Red Sea. Besides the remnants of the declining colonial empires, like British Aden and French Djibouti, the Ethiopian Empire proved most valuable once it annexed Eritrea and obtained access to the Red Sea in 1951. Israel and Ethiopia shared not only similar legendary genealogies back to King David but also geopolitical interest of undermining Egyptian hegemony.

In this geopolitical situation, the Red Sea became a locus of military, diplomatic and commercial activity. Throughout the first decades of its existence, Israel's energy was largely directed southwards. Even prosaic transactions, like shipping canned meat from Eritrea to Eilat, became charged with strategic meaning. An

Fig. 1
Micha Perry. *The Ink-Drawn National Flag*. 1949. Government Press Office, https://www.flickr.com/photos/government_press_office/7621028734

incident involving a meat-laden ship sailing from Massawa to Israel in 1954 almost escalated into a full-scale war. Such a war indeed broke out in 1956, when Israel, together with France and the United Kingdom, attacked Egypt and temporarily captured the Sinai Peninsula. From an Israeli perspective, the main objective was to secure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. This goal continued to dominate Israeli policy in the years leading up to the 1967 war.[3]

A Red Sea moment

In centralised Israel, state interests trickled down to all spheres of life. Red Sea strategy was accompanied by growing curiosity about that mysterious space, which first had to be mapped and studied. During the brief occupation of the Sinai Peninsula in 1956-57, Israeli marine biologists explored wildlife around Sharm al-Shaikh, while a second expedition made it as far south as the Dahlak islands, off the Eritrean coast, in 1962.[4] A delegation of zoologists and parasitologists travelled to Ethiopia in 1958, followed by two expeditions of geologists, geneticists and physicians. One member of an archaeological expedition to the island of Tiran summarised the relationship between knowledge and power: upon Israel's founding, the Red Sea straits 'suddenly acquired military importance'; the events of 1956 'afforded opportunities for field study in relative favourable conditions'.[5]

Beyond scientific knowledge, the military and diplomatic interest inspired literary and artistic engagement with the Red Sea too. Author Nathan Shaham was among the first to have sailed from Eilat to Massawa after the 1956 war, and his impressions from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia were narrated in the Hebrew travelogue *Journey to the Land of Cush*, which was colourfully illustrated by artist Shmuel Katz. The renowned Yiddish poet Avrom Sutzkever too travelled to Eilat and Sinai and was captivated by the landscapes. His poetry after 1949, praised by David Ben

Fig. 2
Nadav Mann. An Israeli military advisor (Shmuel Eitan, second from right) in Ethiopia. 1963. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL990049703970205171/NLI#$FL79244584

Fig. 3
Unknown. The Israel ship 'Queen of Sheba' en route from Eilat to Massawa, calling at Sharm al-Shaikh. 1956. Government Press Office, https://gpophotoeng.gov.il/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?search=D329-097#Preview1

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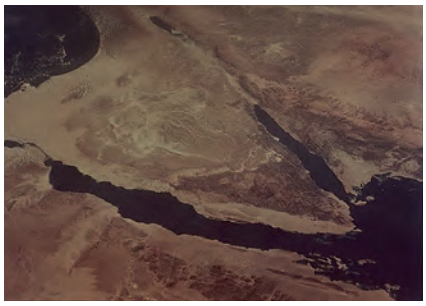
5 A.P. Schick, 'Tiran: the Straits, the Island, and its Terraces', *Israel Exploration Journal* 8, no. 2 (1958): 122.



Gurion,[6] is permeated with images of wadis, coral reefs and – recurring in his desert poems – a great silence:

> *In the Sinai Desert, on a cloud of granite*
> *Sculpted by the Genesis-night,*
> *Hewn of black flame facing the Red Sea,*
> *I saw the Great Silence.*[7]

For a moment, then, the Red Sea – its shores, water, landscapes and surrounding cultures – captivated Israelis. They expressed their fascination in various ways, for example through popular music. The folk duo Hillel and Aviva, with their darbuka and homemade flutes, became known for their desert songs; the Arava (steppe) trio recorded country tunes about Hebrew cowboys; and Lior Yeini employed a cool bossa nova to portray the Red Sea reefs as an escape from city life. The song *To Eilat* (1970) presented the city as a 'gate to the south', oriented towards Djibouti, Mombasa and Kolkata. There, the European capitals of Paris and Rome are but a hazy mirage.

The fascination with the Red Sea intensified after the Six-Day War in 1967, when the IDF defeated the Egyptian army and conquered the Sinai Peninsula, this time with long-term plans. Having more than tripled its size, Israel had become a Red Sea power, ruling over the vast Sinai Desert, the Gulf of Aqaba and the Tiran Straits. While Sinai was not as subject to Messianic projections as was the occupied West Bank – supposedly the heartland of biblical Israel – the conquered desert was similarly envisaged to be populated by Jewish pioneers. As the new frontier aroused an old Zionist passion for colonisation, hundreds of Israeli idealists flocked to Sinai to make the desert bloom. Several Jewish settlements – Ofira (Sharm al-Shaikh), Di Zahav (Dahab) and Neviot (Nuweiba) – concentrated along the Red Sea coast to become centres of fishing and tourism.

Fig. 4
Benno Rothenberg. A woman looking towards the Gulf of Eilat/Aqaba. undated. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009858550305171/NLI#$FL169950643

Fig. 5
Uncredited. The Sinai Peninsula, taken from the Gemini XI space shuttle. 1966. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL990035790120205171/NLI#$FL19169324

6 Jowita Panczyk, 'Is the War Over Yet?', Shaul Marmari ed. *Mimeo: Blog der Doktorandinnen und Doktoranden am Dubnow-Institut*, Leibniz-Institut für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur – Simon Dubnow, 18 December 2013, https://mimeo.dubnow.de/is-the-war-over-yet/.

7 Avram Sutzkever, 'The Great Silence', in *A. Sutzkever: Selected Poetry and Prose,* ed. Benjamin Harshav (Oakland: University of California Press, 1991), 343.

Fading space

During those years of occupation, a new Israeli identity began crystalising. In the spirit of the global 1960s and 1970s, the highly militarised territory, with its pristine beaches and solemn deserts, became fertile soil for ideas about nature, free love and recreational drug use. In that geopolitical hotspot, hippie culture merged with Zionist idealism, military duty, Oriental fantasy and biblical myth. Former settlers recall a feeling of idyllic freedom and liberation from modern life.[8]

The Neviot music festival that took place in Nuweiba in August 1978 marks the climax of Israel's Red Sea era. Thousands of partygoers travelled to the remote Red Sea settlement to participate in what has often been described as the Israeli Woodstock. Amid the occupied land, they slept under the starry skies, swam naked and danced to Hebrew covers of Stevie Wonder. Singer Mickey Gavrielov recalled being 'thrown into a world where the experience was different from your familiar reality'.[9]

Fig. 6
Moshe Marlin Levin. Ofira. 1975. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997008872695805171/NLI#$FL151612284

Fig. 7
Boris Karmi. An Israeli plays the guitar in Nuweiba. 1975. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009324688405171/NLI#$FL159538630

8 For recent recollections, see Osher Assulin and Yoav Gross. *Sinai*. Israel: Kan11, 2022.

9 Rachel Neiman, 'Looking back on the 1978 "Woodstock of Israel"', Nicky Blackburn ed. *Israel21c*, 9 October 2017, https://www.israel21c.org/looking-back-on-the-1978-woodstock-of-israel.

That experience was short-lived. While thousands were dancing in Nuweiba, negotiations between Israel and Egypt were underway. In September, the Camp David Accords were signed, paving the way for Israeli-Egyptian peace. The agreement prescribed that Israel withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. As Ofira, Neviot and Di Zahav were evacuated, it shrank back to its 10-kilometre strip of Red Sea coast in Eilat. As the leadership was determined not to dwell on the past, Israel's 15 years in Sinai have largely vanished from the collective memory. The memories of the coral reefs and the barren mountains have faded, kept alive today only by a handful former inhabitants of the evacuated settlements.[10]

Once the peace treaty with Egypt ensured safe shipping to and from Eilat, there was no longer any need for Israel to operate militarily or diplomatically in the Red Sea. That Israel's newfound ally in the region disappeared when Ethiopia sank into a long civil war only diminished the region's appeal. Without rivals or friends, the Red Sea lost its geopolitical and cultural meaning. As Israeli ships safely plied its waters, the sea became a conduit that moves goods so smoothly that they leave no impression. From a strategic arena, it became a non-issue or 'non-space' – a transitory zone without any meaning.[11]

At the same time, Israel turned its gaze elsewhere. In 1978, the year of the Neviot festival, an essay collection by Jacqueline Kahanoff suggested a new direction. Kahanoff, an Egyptian-born Israeli essayist, had previously published a collection of translated African stories, following the Red Sea orientation of the time. Her 1978 book *From East the Sun* turned away from Africa and the Red Sea towards the Levant. Together with the journal *Apirion* that has appeared since 1982, the publication marks growing Israeli interest in the Mediterranean.

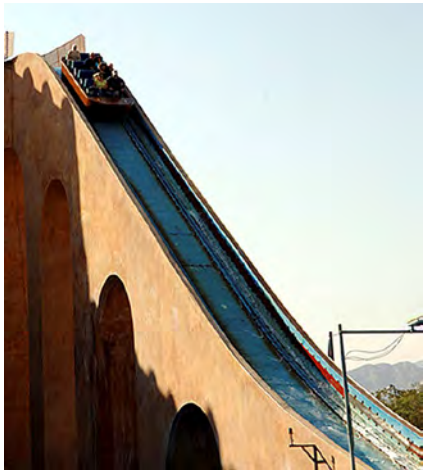
Mediterraneanism and Erythreanism

Israel has a long history with the Mediterranean. While Zionism turned most of its energy and eros to the land, 'conquering the sea' played an important secondary role. In Zionist thought, the conquered water was always the Mediterranean, along whose coastline large Jewish settlements developed. Ultimately, the Mediterranean served as the setting for the Zionist drama of Aliyah, of Jewish migration to the Land of Israel. Fantastic Zionist plans to storm Palestine from the south, from the Red Sea, were overshadowed by the heroic narrative of crossing the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean has featured prominently in Zionist thought, affording Jews ways of belonging to the region while evading

Fig. 8
Sa'ar Ya'acov. The closed gates of the Neviot holiday village shortly before its evacuation. 1982. Israeli Government Press Office, https://gpophotoeng.gov.il/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?search=D320-064#Preview1

10 For examples, see the testimonies on http://myofira.com/en.
11 Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).



the hostility of the Arab and Muslim Middle East. For Israelis who feel trapped in their imagined outpost of Western civilisation, the Mediterranean provides an alternative self-image that is neither entirely Western nor Eastern.[12] Instead, the Mediterranean space emerges as a zone of cosmopolitan, fluid, syncretic identities between East and West. By adopting that kind of Mediterraneanism, the implied argument goes, Israel could forge greater harmony with its neighbours and among its internal divisions.

Mediterranean identity contains more than lofty ideas.[13] It suffuses Israeli culture, where Greek music, Turkish mezze and a 'Mediterranean temper' are unanimously prized. Feeling thoroughly Mediterranean, Israelis forget or suppress any connection to the Red Sea. That Africa is next door, that Massawa is closer to Eilat than Palermo to Tel Aviv, is 'cognitively, culturally and politically repressed and denied'.[14] And while the beaches of Eilat are still a popular tourist destination, they are drained of cultural meaning; grandiose attractions like waterparks and skating rinks dominate the landscape. Tellingly, even Eilat's Queen of Sheba hotel, whose namesake's kingdom flanked the Red Sea, invites its guests to 'explore the culinary delights of the Mediterranean'.[15]

Israeli consciousness appears to have completely shifted away from the Red Sea and towards the Mediterranean. When the geopolitical reality required, however, Israel turned to the Red Sea with military, political, commercial, scientific and cultural enthusiasm. The connections it formed in that space

Fig. 9
Moshe Milner. Water slide in Eilat. 2005. Israeli Government Press Office, https://gpophotoeng.gov.il/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?search=D927-032#Preview1

Fig. 10
Boris Karmi. Nude swimming in Eilat. 1967. National Library of Israel, https://www.nli.org.il/en/images/NNL_ARCHIVE_AL997009325145805171/NLI#$FL159554099

12 Yaacov Shavit, 'The Mediterranean World and "Mediterraneanism": The Origins, Meaning, and Application of a Geo-Cultural Notion in Israel', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 3, no. 2 (1988): 112.

13 Alexandra Nocke, *The Place of the Mediterranean in Modern Israeli Identity* (Boston Brill, 2009); David Ohana, *Israel and Its Mediterranean Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

14 Eitan Bar-Yosef, *A Villa in the Jungle: Africa in Israeli Culture* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute Press and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2013); Haim Yacobi, *Israel and Africa: A Geneaology of Moral Geography* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

15 Quoted from http://www.dinearound.eu/en/189/195/132/eilat/hilton_eilat_queen_of_sheba.

only dissolved when the geopolitical circumstances changed. Israel's history with the Red Sea is thus one of dis:connection, of globalisation and deglobalisation.[16]

But some connections remain. The Negev Bedouin, the Sudanese and Eritrean refugees, the Ethiopian and Yemeni Jewish communities, and the aging hippies of Ofira and Neviot all share affinities to the south. In Eilat, the colloquial designation for flipflops as 'Djiboutis' still recalls past ties overseas. The Red Sea need not resurface only in relation to drone and missile strikes; Israel might strike a better balance between Mediterraneanism and Erythreanism.[17]

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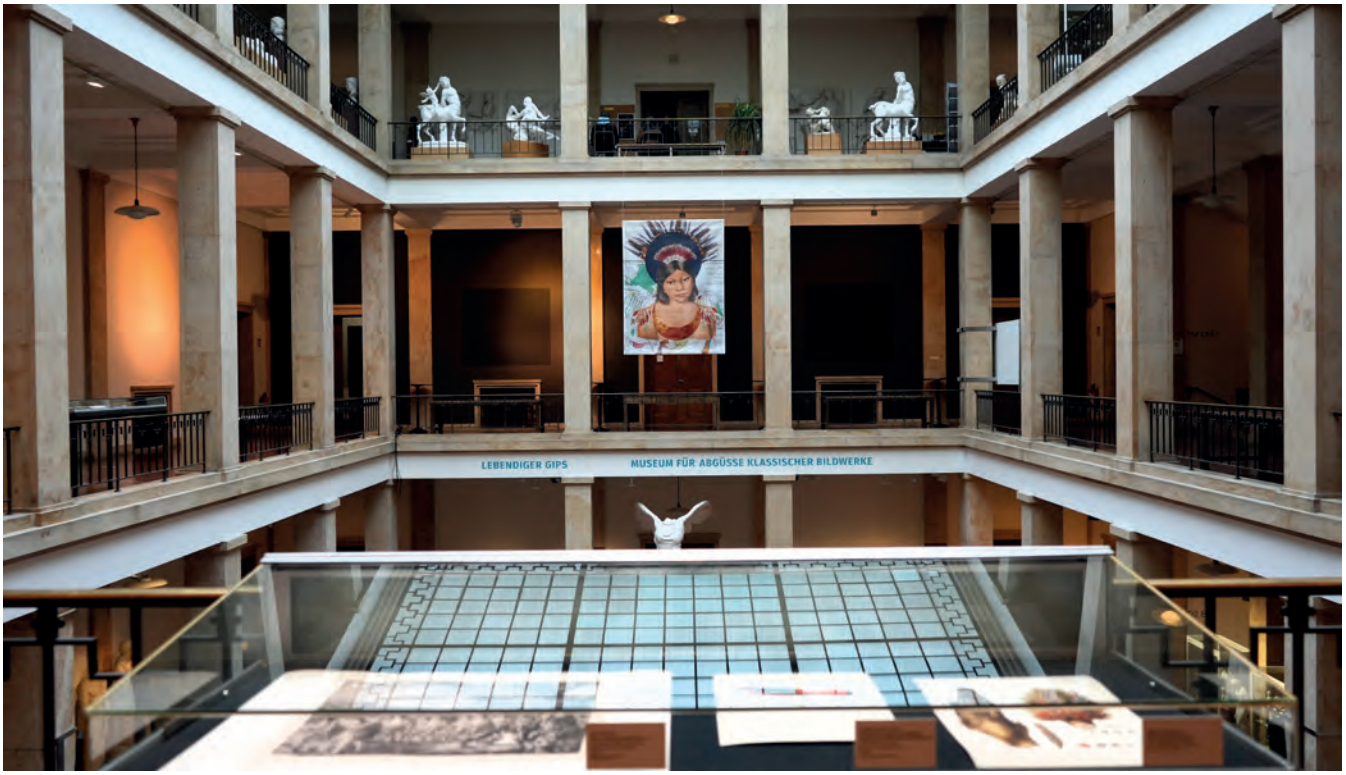
16 Roland Wenzlhuemer et al., 'Forum Global Dis:connections', *Journal of Modern European History* 21, no. 1 (2023) https://doi.org/10.1177/16118944221148939.
17 This point has also been made by Ofri Ilany, 'Israelis Need to Stop Turning Their Backs on the Red Sea', *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), 13 May 2016, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2016-05-13/ty-article/0000017f-f571-d044-adff-f7f933f70000.

Art-science-humanity

Travelling Back: revisiting 19th-century transfers between Munich and Brazil

Sabrina Moura



Travelling Back was an exhibition presented at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte between February and April 2024, offering a critical perspective on the narratives and collections brought from Brazil to Munich by Bavarian scientists Johann Baptist von Spix (1781–1826) and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1794–1868) in the 19th century.[1] My research on this topic was made possible through a fellowship at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre global dis:connect.

Fig. 1
Felix Ehlers, Travelling Back (2024), Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich

1 I thank Ann-Katrin Fischer and Sophia Fischer for their invaluable support as curatorial assistants.

The exhibition follows the scientists' extensive three-year journey across the Brazilian hinterland, including the Amazonian region, and raises crucial questions about the colonial underpinnings of the scientific pursuits of the natural-history project between Munich and Brazil in the 19th century. It examines the various displays and interpretations of Spix and Martius's collections from their arrival in Germany to the present, shedding light on the dis:connections in the production of knowledge behind these scientific endeavours. The aim is not only to explore the public reception of these experiences through a historical lens but also to engage in a critical examination through the perspectives of present-day dialogues and initiatives.

Here, we feature various chapters of the exhibition along with the documents, images, publications and artworks presented at the show.

1

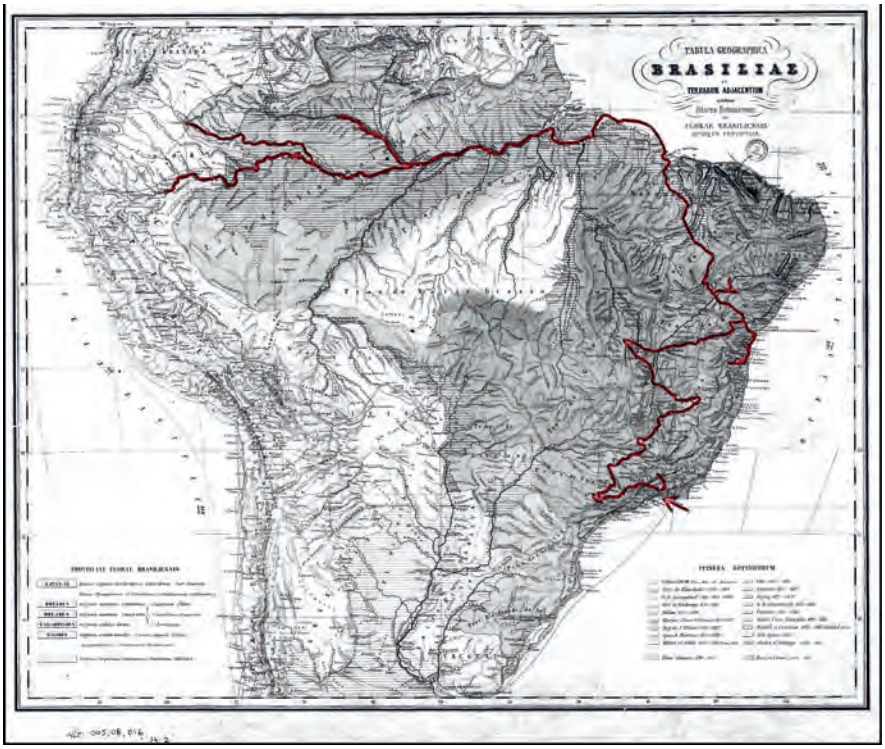
Fig. 2
Carl Friedrich Heinzmann. 'Vögel-Teich am Rio de S. Francisco '. In *Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien*, Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, Munich: Lidauer, et al., 1823.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, scientific expeditions were part of a global natural history project guided by a knowledge-making mission that was seemingly nobler than that of the colonial conquest. In pursuit of science and universal knowledge, the exploration of new territories, the naming of new species and the act of collecting became part of a classificatory rationale rooted in Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* (1735).

In this context, the expedition of Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius to Brazil – commissioned by King Maximilian I Joseph of Bavaria (1756–1825) in association with the Austrian Empire – stands out as a key undertaking in European scientific exploration of South America. The desire to explore the biodiversity of the tropics was facilitated by the opening of

Brazilian ports in 1808, following the transfer of the Portuguese royal court to Rio de Janeiro. This pivotal event marked the end of Portugal's policy of limiting foreign scientists' access to its colony – a restriction that had notably hindered Alexander von Humboldt's plans to explore this region.

2



Spix and Martius arrived in Brazil through the port of Rio de Janeiro in July 1817. They spent about six months there, acclimatising and preparing for the subsequent stages of their expedition. In the first half of 1818, they embarked on a journey on foot and by mule, accompanied by a varying entourage, through the interior of Brazil from the southeast to the northwest. In later years, they reached and explored the vast Amazonian regions, where they encountered numerous indigenous groups, including the Juri,

Fig. 3
Felix Ehlers, Travelling Back (2024) Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich.

Fig. 4
'Map of Brazil showing 1817-20 route followed by Martius and Spix'. In *Flora Brasiliensis On-Line*, São Paulo: Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo, 1820.

Fig. 5
E. Meyer, 'Trinkfest der Coroados', facsimile. In *Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien (1823-1831)*, by Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

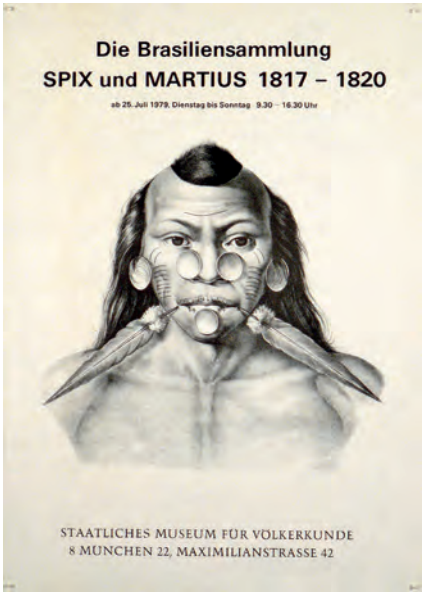
Fig. 6
Van der Velden. 'Tanz der Puris'. In *Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien (1823-1831)*, by Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

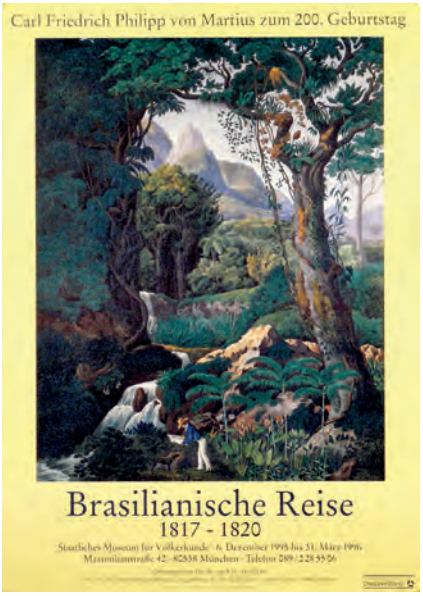
Miranha and Tikuna peoples. From these communities, they collected artifacts and conducted detailed descriptions related to their physical characteristics, habits and languages.

3

During their years in Brazil, Spix and Martius periodically sent reports and various items to Munich to account for the Kingdom of Bavaria's investment in their expedition. Upon returning to Europe

in 1820, they focused on analysing and cataloguing their findings, which included numerous ethnographic objects, minerals, plants and animal species. These items are now part of the Bavarian state collections.





Publishing was a significant aspect of their work. One of their most renowned publications is the multi-volume series Reise in Brasilien (1823–1831). Historian Karen Macknow Lisboa notes that this work interweaves scientific discourse with a romantic perspective of nature, which was popular among German naturalists in the 19th century.[2] The book portrays an idealised vision of tropical nature,

2 Karen Macknow Lisboa, 'Da Expedição Científica à Ficcionalização da Viagem: Martius e seu romance indianista sobre o Brasil', *Acervo* 21, no. 1 (2011), https://revista.arquivonacional.gov.br/index.php/revistaacervo/article/view/91.

Fig. 7
'Spix und Martius Ausstellung, Masken und Federschmuck '. In *Sammlung Fotografie & Schriften*, Munich: Museum Fünf Kontinente München, 1928.

Fig. 8
'Unter Indianern Brasiliens', Ausstellungsplakat. In *Sammlung Fotografie & Schriften*, Munich: Museum Fünf Kontinente München, 1979.

Fig. 9
Brasilianische Reise, 1817-1820', Ausstellungsplakat. In *Sammlung Fotografie & Schriften*, Munich: Museum Fünf Kontinente München, 1995.

which contrasts with a hierarchical perception of human societies. The text contains numerous passages in which indigenous people are described as inferior to Europeans. 'The temperament of the Indian is almost wholly underdeveloped, and appears as phlegm', they wrote in the first volume of *Reise in Brasilien*.[3]

Their work also resulted in several illustrated scientific publications. *Flora Brasiliensis* (1840–1906) is an example where Martius aimed to describe all known Brazilian flora up to that time. The first issue was published in 1840, and it took more than half a century to complete. Martius did not live to see the work's completion and, after his passing, other botanists undertook the project. It is still used as a reference in contemporary botany.

4

E O S.

Zeitschrift zur Erheiterung und Belehrung.

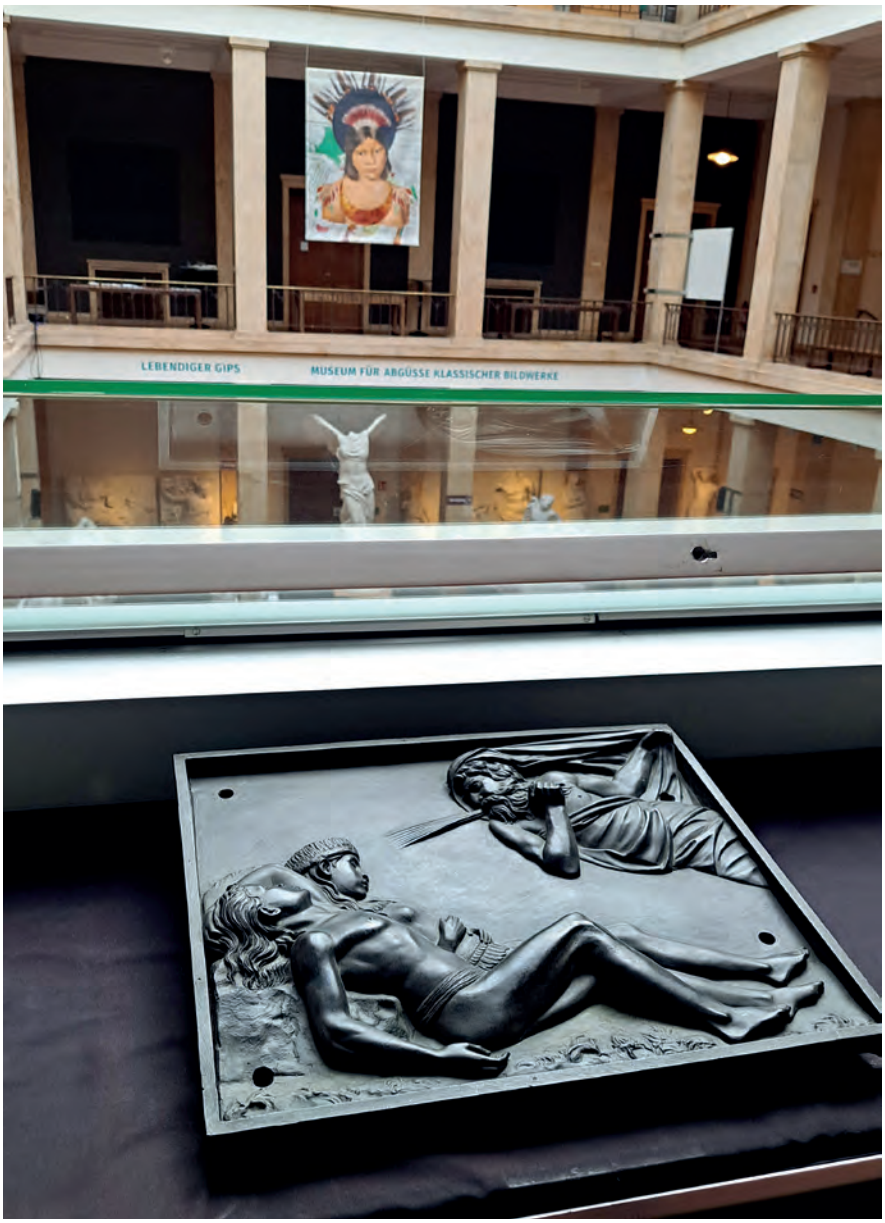
Dienstag — 23. — den 20. März 1821.

Ueber Brasilien.

Der Amazonenstrom ist einer der merkwürdigsten und größten Flüße auf unserer Erde. Er nimmt seinen Ursprung von der Ostseite der Cordillere, der Anden, und strömt immer in der Richtung der Linie zwölfhundert teutsche Meilen lang bis gegen Para, wo er in den atlantischen Ozean einmündet. Bey seiner Einmündung hat er eine Ausdehnung von 40 teutschen Meilen, und in seinem Innern drey bis fünf. Jährlich vergehen und entstehen neue Inseln, und er stellt in dieser Hinsicht ein Bild des Chaos der früheren Weltschöpfung dar. Dieser grosse Strom, durchschneidet beynahe die Mitte von Südamerika, und nimmt, gleich dem Herzen im thierischen Körper, in seinem Verlaufe von Norden und Süden, sehr viele fern herkommende und breite Flüsse in sich auf. Unter den Nebenflüssen, welche von Norden kommen, sind der Rio Napo, Jca, der Japura, besonders der Rio Branco und der Rio Negro die merkwürdigsten; beyde letztere entspringen noch weit jenseits der Linie aus Guiana, und münden 300 Meilen von Para in denselben ein. Von der Südseite nimmt er die Rios Jabari, Jutai, Juruna, Teffé, Purus, Madera, Topajos, Xingu und Tocantin in sich auf; unter diesen entspringen der Xingu und Tocantin tief von Goyaz und Cuyaba; der Rio Madera selbst kommunizirt in seinen ersten Ursprüngen mit dem Rio Grande do Sul, und durch ihn mit dem beynahe nicht viel minder grossen la Plataſtrom, welcher bey Buenos-Ayres ins Meer fällt. Der majestätische Amazonas ist unter drey Namen bekannt. Die Portugiesen nennen ihn, von Para bis dorthin wo der Rio Negro in ihm einmündet, Rio des Amazonas, von jenen fabelhaften Jungfrauen Amazonen genannt, welche der erste Entdecker ein Portugiese Orellana auf demselben bemerkt haben will; von der Einmündung des Rio Negro bis zur spanischen Grenze bey Tabatinga, nennen die Portugiesen denselben Strom Solimoens, nach der ehemals herrschenden und nun ausgestorbenen indischen Nation Sorimoens; von der spanischen Grenze bis zu seinem Ursprung in der Cordillere, geben ihm die Spanier den Namen Maranhao, (kleines Meer.) Was in den einzelnen Capitanien von Brasilien zerstreut und weniger fruchtbar vorkommt, wächst hier in den Wäldern, oder an der Küste dieses majestätischen Stromes, theils wild theils kultivirt, in der größten Ueppigkeit. Unter den hier vorkommenden Produkten, sind Zucker, Kaffee, Cacao, Indigo, Salsaparila, amerikanischer Zimmt, Taback, Baumwolle, Vanille, Manico, Reis, Mais ꝛc. die häufigsten und bekanntesten. Die Fruchtbarkeit des von diesem Fluß bewässerten oder befruchteten Bodens ist so groß, daß ein Saamenkorn vom türkischen Korn mehrere tausende giebt. Das Klima ist der geographischen Lage gemäß sehr heiß, jedoch durch die fortlaufenden Küstenwälder und durch die ausserordentliche Wassermenge sehr gemäßigt, aber eben deswegen bis nach weiterer Cultivirung noch etwas ungesund, für Reisende noch durch Myriaden von Mosquiten und Stechfliegen äusserst beschwerlich, und durch die ausserordentliche Menge von Onzen, Krokodilen, giftigen Schlangen, wilden Indiern ꝛc. selbst lebensgefährlich; die Wälder sind von den mannigfaltigsten Arten wilder Thiere bewohnt, die Kuppen der mit ihrem Haupte in den Wolken sich verlierenden Bäume mit den verschiedenartigsten Pflanzen und Blumen durchwirkt, und von muntern Vögeln mit dem schönsten Gefieder allenthalben belebt. Das gelbliche Gewässer dieses ausgedehnten und kräftigen Stromes selbst ist von tau-

Fig. 10
'Ueber Brasilien'. *Eos. Zeitschrift zur Erheiterung und Belehrung* (Munich), 20 March 1821, 93.

3 Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, *Reise in Brasilien: auf Befehl Sr. Maj. Maximilian Joseph I. Königs von Baiern in d. J. 1817-20 gemacht,* vol. 1,1 (Munich: Lindauer, et al., 1823), 241. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/details/bsb11212343.



Following Spix and Martius's return to Munich in 1820, a significant aspect drew the attention of the local press: the presence of two indigenous children who had crossed the Atlantic with them. These children, named Isabella Miranha and Johann Juri, after their Christian baptism, were survivors from a group of six indigenes taken from Amazonia by the Bavarian scientists.

Early articles from 1820 generally depicted the children as wild and unresponsive. Descriptions of Miranha often emphasised her hair, likening it to a horse's to underscore her 'wild' origin. In contrast, Juri was described more positively, as a 'not unattractive boy with friendly eyes'. These physical depictions often influenced the interpretations of their behaviour.[4] Juri was characterised as

Fig. 11
Johann Baptist Stiglmaier. Grabrelief der Kinder Juri und Miranha. c. 1824. Münchner Stadtmuseum, Sammlung Angewandte Kunst. Photo by Sabrina Moura.

4 Maria de Fátima Costa, 'Os 'meninos índios' que Spix e Martius levaram a Munique', *Artelogie. Recherche sur les arts, le patrimoine et la littérature de l'Amérique latine* 14 (2019), https://doi.org/10.4000/artelogie.3774. https://doi.org/10.4000/artelogie.3774.

good and calm, while Miranha was considered unkind and cold. As time passed, these accounts began to change. For example, when the girl started playing with dolls or sewing, the press noted these as adaptations to European education and habits. However, this didn't last long. Shortly after arriving in Munich, Miranha and Juri passed away. The boy succumbed to a long and painful pulmonary illness in 1821, and the girl followed a year later. Newspapers report that even after his passing, Juri remained of interest for scientific research, as evidenced by the creation of a wax impression of his head.[5]

A posthumous tribute to the children was undertaken by the Queen Karoline of Bavaria, who commissioned the Bavarian artist Johann Baptist Stiglmaier (1791–1844) to create a bronze mortuary stele to adorn their tomb at Munich's Old South Cemetery. The stele was removed from the cemetery and is now possessed by the Münchner Stadtmuseum.

The practice of bringing indigenous individuals to Europe for scientific scrutiny dates back to the 16th century. Ethnographer Christian Feest notes that in the 1820s, at least seven Indigenous individuals from Brazil were living in Europe, either in imperial or noble households or displayed to the public, with only one returning to Brazil.[6] The remains of at least three became part of museum collections.

5

The images in Spix and Martius's books were created before the invention of photography in 1826 and, like many illustrations in travel accounts, went through several layers of interpretation before being made available to the public. Their initial sketches,

Fig. 12
Felix Ehlers, Travelling Back (2024) Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich.

5 Klaus Schönitzer, 'From the New World to the Old World', *Journal Fünf Kontinente: Forum für ethnologische Forschung* 1 (2014).
6 Christian Feest, 'Botocudos in Europe in the 1820s', (2022), https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29215.43686.

whether created on-site or later, were subject to successive re-readings as they were prepared for publication by 19th-century engravers.

In the following centuries, these images entered the public domain and gained wide circulation, appearing in exhibitions and on the internet. To better understand them, it is essential to acknowledge the multiple lives and contexts that these images traversed. Portraits, such as those of Miranha, Juri and other indigenous people featured in *Reise in Brasilien*, shed light on the pictorial conventions that guided ethnographic representations in travel accounts. These portraits also highlight the frequently stereotyped perceptions of indigenous peoples prevailing in European society.

The disparities between the drawings contained in the Martiusiana archives at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, created in 1821, and the final versions subsequently published in the *Reise in Brasilien* atlas serve as a poignant reminder that images, much like texts, are discursive constructs heavily influenced by perception, interpretation, language and the techniques available at the time of their creation.

6

The encounter with the portraits of Isabella Miranha and Johann Juri at an exhibition in São Paulo is a pivotal moment in the novel *O Som do Rugido da Onça* (2021), authored by Brazilian writer Micheliny Verunschk. This scene depicts a significant instance when one of the book's main characters, Josefa, enters an exhibition room and is met with the gaze of the two indigenous children represented in the portraits. They appear to be looking at her with an eerie sense of life.

Verunschk's narrative skilfully intertwines Josefa's contemporary experiences with the historical past of Juri and Miranha, particularly imagining the inner life of Isabella Miranha, referred to

Fig. 13
'Miranha'. In *Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien* (1823-1831), by Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

Fig. 14
'Iuri'. In *Atlas zur Reise in Brasilien* (1823-1831), by Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

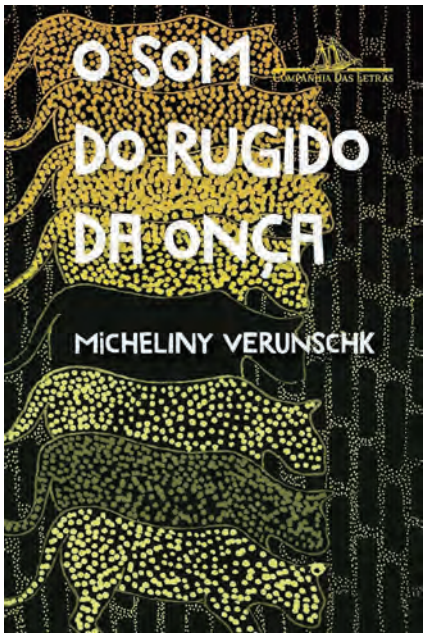


Fig. 15
Cover of Verunshk, Micheliny. *O Som do Rurgido da Onça* São Paulo: Cia das Letras 2021.

Fig. 16
Gê Viana. *Isabel Miranha*. 2020. digital collage,

as Iñe-ê in the novel. Through her fiction, the author offers readers a unique perspective, allowing them to explore how imagination and speculation – or 'critical fabulation' in the words of Saidiya Hartman – can breathe life into a story that, despite being the subject of discussions and numerous publications, remains noticeably absent from public spaces of memory.

Fiction has also been a means for other authors to grapple with these experiences, as evidenced by the work of writer Henrike Leonhardt *Unerbittlich des Nordens rauher Winter* (1987) and by Carl Friedrich von Martius himself, who, in 1831, wrote *Frey Apollonio: Roman aus Brasilien* (1992). Published more than a century later, this novel blends first-person and third-person narration to recount the story of the young scientist Hartoman, who serves as Martius's alter ego.[7]

7

Verunschk's writing engages in a dialogue with two significant works in this exhibition: *Isabela People* (2020) by Gê Viana and *Urban Bodies*, Munich (2023) by Yolanda Gutierrez. These pieces employ visual intervention and performance as powerful tools to reveal new presences of Juri and Miranha in the contemporary landscape of Munich. Their artistic approaches delve deep into the possibilities of reimagining the existence of these figures in the present, allowing for the emergence of alternative memories and rewriting their histories.

The artist Frauke Zabel's practice revolves around the counter-narratives that emerge through the mapping of various locations in the city, where she traces collections, historical sites and tributes dedicated to Spix and Martius in Munich's public spaces. In her piece for this exhibition, entitled *the palm trees grouping themselves as follows:* (2023), she investigates Martius's studies on palm trees, forming her own collection of evidence to narrate the history of these plants as research subjects. Zabel's collection examines the symbolism, exoticisation, profitability and knowledge production related to palm trees in colonial and neo-colonial contexts.

Elaine Pessoa, through her work *Exploratorius* (2023), questions the future of images in what she terms the 'colonialism of data'. Pessoa interacts with the drawings, diaries and visual documents that constitute the scientific accounts of Spix and Martius's travels. Through a series of experiments with artificial intelligence and manual artistic interventions, including staining, painting and scarring, she reinterprets representations of Brazilian tropical landscapes, jungles, forests and biomes.

7 Lisboa, 'Da Expedição Científica'.

Fig. 17
Frauke Zabel. *die Palmen sich wie folgt gruppieren:* . 2023. mixed media.

Fig. 18
Elaine Pessoa. *Exploratorius*. 2023. mixed media.

Fig. 19
Igor Vidor. *Travels in Brazil: Spix, Martius and Blanka*, #1. 2022. digital collage.

Furthermore, artist Igor Vidor adds a unique dimension to this artistic dialogue by digitally intervening in the images of the *Reise in Brasilien* atlas. He integrates the character Blanka from

the video game *Street Fighter* into the landscapes originally documented by Spix and Martius. Blanka, a green-skinned mutant boy who finds himself in the Amazon after a plane crash, undergoes a significant transformation due to contact with plant chlorophyll, which explains his appearance and abilities. In Vidor's work, Blanka becomes an unexpected visitor, disrupting the narrative of the Bavarian explorers by adding elements of fantasy and surrealism to their depicted reality.

8

Beyond the exhibition space, discussions about Travelling Back have expanded into a series of debates and media coverage that are crucial for understanding how the expedition is perceived today, both in academic circles and among the general audience, as exemplified by the opening conference on 9 February 2024. It featured artists Frauke Zabel and Yolanda Gutiérrez, alongside writer Micheliny Verunschk and historian Karen Macknow Lisboa. Each speaker related the points of departure – visual arts, history and literature – that led them to explore Spix and Martius's travels to Brazil and their implications for contemporary public discourse.

While their works engage with aspects that are often uncomfortable for those seeking to preserve the legacy and reputation of the Bavarian scientists, it is important to distance these critical views from political attacks on historical biographies. Rather, they seek to highlight colonial dimensions in the history of the natural sciences, prompting discussions beyond simplistic narratives that overlook the complexities of knowledge produced from such experiences.

Fig. 20
Frauke Zabel speaks at the opening conference of the exhibition *Travelling Back* (February 2024), Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich. Photo: Sabrina Moura

Thus, a critical history of science, in dialogue with the arts, intersects with the politics of memory. It underscores that history is a field for contestation, that should challenge the pitfalls of homogeneous temporal linearity and single narrators. *Travelling Back* attempted to escape these risks by portraying Spix and Martius as just two among many other narrators of this Bavarian-led journey through the hinterlands of Brazil.

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Fig. 21
Micheliny Verunshk, Yolanda Gutiérrez and Karen Macknow Lisboa at the location of ancient tomb of Iuri and Miranha at the Munich Old South Cemetery (February 2024). Photo: Sabrina Moura

Facing Gaia: Justin Brice Guariglia's landscape photography in an ecological perspective

Peter Seeland

In 2015, artist Justin Brice Guariglia participated in NASA's Operation Ice Bridge, flying over Greenland and photographing the Galloping Glacier near Jacobshavn. This glacier is among the fastest melting in the world, and few places illustrate the effects of climate change as starkly.[1] Guariglia observed the melting ice and heard the cracks splitting the archipelago. Later, he spent months working with gesso, acrylic and plastics on these photographs, creating tactile surface textures like *Jacobshavn I (Fig. 1, 2)*.[2]

A year later and about 800 kilometres northwest of Jacobshavn, French philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour flew over Baffin Island to Canada, where he spoke on perceptions of nature in the era of climate change. From the airplane, he looked down on Earth. Baffin Island, the largest island in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, has been covered with ice for millennia. Yet, instead of a frozen white desert, Latour saw barren tundra for hours. In recent decades, the island's ice sheets have retreated by more than half due to global warming, and during the 2016 heatwave the island

1 The retreat of the ice is impressively illustrated in this NASA graphic: 'Ice Loss from Jakobshavn Glacier', NASA, 2015, accessed 25 February, 2024, https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/86436/ice-loss-from-jakobshavn-glacier.

2 Alina Cohen, 'Justin Brice Guariglia's Powerful Photos of Melting Glaciers: In the studio with the first artist to join a NASA mission', *Galerie Magazine*, 2017, https://galeriemagazine.com/justin-brice-guariglia-creates-powerful-photographs-of-melting-glaciers/. Guariglia's website shows works from the same series and works depicting agricultural areas and mining. He always uses a similar technique and pictorial formula: 'Justin Brice - Artwork', accessed 25 February 2024, https://www.justinbrice.com/artwork.

Fig. 1
Justin Brice Guariglia: *JACOBSHAVN I*, 2015/2016, Acrylic, Polystyrene Panel, 325.12 x 243.84 x 4.44 cm, Private Collection. (reproduced with artist's permission)

was almost ice-free.[3] Latour was deeply affected by the sight of the cracked, sparse ice. Bitterly, he compared the ravaged landscape to the tortured face and surface of Munch's *The Scream*. He said, 'It was as though the ice was sending me a message'.[4]

Greenland and the Arctic are considered 'ground-zero zones'[5] of climate change, and it's telling that both Guariglia and Latour are so moved by these landscapes. The artificial transformation of nature becomes a visual experience for both, and it seems

3 Rebecca Anderson et al., 'A millennial perspective on Arctic warming from 14C in quartz and plants emerging from beneath ice caps', *Geophysical Research Letters* 35, no. 1 (2008), https://doi.org/10.1029/2007GL032057.

4 Ava Kofman, 'Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science', *New York Times* (New York) 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html. Accessed 28.10.2024.

5 "USC Fisher Museum of Art: Earth Works: Mapping the Anthropocene ", USC Fisher Museum of Art, https://fisher.usc.edu/2018/06/07/earth-works/, last accessed 22.05.2024.

to be a new experience and a new relation to nature that is emerging through this direct confrontation. Latour describes the experience as an emotional dialogue, and Guariglia processes it through art. So, to what extent is *Jacobshavn I* a new image of nature and of a changing relationship between us and nature? How can comparing Latour's theories and Guariglia's art help us think through the climate crisis? This essay compares Guariglia's artistic treatment of the Anthropocene with Latour's theoretical approach, contextualising both in the broader discourse on the Anthropocene. This comparison demonstrates how art can reflect the relationship between humans and nature. Additionally, it illustrates how art can foster the creation of new, less destructive representations of nature, which are attuned to the challenges of the Anthropocene. Art could thus shift consciousness, providing a novel approach to the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Art and ecology

Researching contemporary art from an ecological perspective involves integrating environmental crises, their impacts on our conceptions of ourselves as humans, how we understand nature, and how we deal with them. It also entails investigating the relationship between humans and nature. These discussions are often labelled with the term *Anthropocene*, omnipresent in popular and academic discourses. Sometimes appearing in unreliable articles, sometimes taken as a given in serious discussions, or heavily criticised by researchers, the term is plagued by confusion.[6] The literature counts many essays on the Anthropocene and its impact on humans, culture and society, often under the umbrella of ecocriticism in philosophy, sociology, history and literary criticism, including aesthetics and art.[7] Bruno Latour, a luminary in the Anthropocene discourse, has engaged intensely with ecology, art and the humanities.[8] As Phillipe Pignarre notes, 'Latour is really the thinker of the Anthropocene'.[9]

6 The concept of the *Anthropocene* should be used advisedly. Despite its many definitions and the attendant vagueness, the term is strategically useful. I understand *Anthropocene* to refer to the conceptual synthesis of all the symptoms of global, crisis-ridden and man-made environmental transformations. Humans are emerging as a new global geological force that is profound shaping the planet, and these transformations represent a break with the environmental and living conditions of the last 12,000 years. Symptoms are not only scientifically measurable, social and political changes, but also the effects on our understanding of ourselves and nature. The Anthropocene is not meant as a concrete scientific geological-stratigraphic epoch – a controversial claim beyond the scope of this essay. For more on the term and its history, see Eva Horn and Hannes Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2019), 8-25.

7 Félix Guatarri combined aesthetics and ecology long before the term *Anthropocene* emerged. See Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1985). For an overview of the discourse on aesthetics and the Anthropocene, see: Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 120-43.

8 Ludolf Kuchenbuch, 'Bruno Latours Anthropozän und die Historie: Feststellungen, Anknüpfungen, Fragen', *Historische Anthropologie* 26, no. 3 (2018): 381, https://doi.org/10.7788/hian.2018.26.3.379.

9 Kofman, 'Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher'.

Jacobshavn I and the Anthropocene discourse

Jacobshavn I is intertwined with aspects of Latour's thought and the Anthropocene discourse in general. Knowing that Guariglia engages deeply with the discourse of Anthropocene, several pivotal aspects of the discourse and how viewers perceive *Jacobshavn I*.

Disorientation

The object depicted in the work remains utterly vague. Various visual elements intensify the disorientation, including the perspective, the size and the materiality of the representation. The image implies no particular vantage point, leaving the viewer's position unclear and compelling them back into their own subjective standpoint.

Such disorientation characterises the Anthropocene. Bruno Latour diagnoses a new climate regime in the Anthropocene, as nature becomes a decisive actor.[10] A nature previously passive and objectified suddenly becomes an active, potent actor. This leaves humans in aporia, completely alienated from such nature. Further, nature as the setting of human existence and experience threatens to dissolve. The destructive element of changing the natural environment induces ontological upheaval of the world's structure, according to Latour.[11] Nature is no longer a constant. Humans have no fixed point to position themselves in the world's structure.[12] *Jacobshavn I* mirrors this disorientation. The lack of Euclidean perspective reflects the subject's aporia in understanding nature through the Anthropocene.[13]

Unreadability

The representation is also unreadable, which recalls and surpasses disorientation. Every visual detail eludes reference; it remains entirely unclear what material is depicted where. The representation resists any cultural and subjective assimilation by the viewer, defying intuitive understanding.

Unreadability is also present in the Anthropocene discourse. The Anthropocene is characterised by a 'clash of scales'.[14] Scales that

10 Bruno Latour, *Anthropocene Lecture: Bruno Latour* (Berlin: Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2018). https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/video/anthropocene-lecture-bruno-latour.
11 Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 124-25.
12 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 101.
13 Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 'Disconnected', in *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020), 75.
14 Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 128.

elude human perception are juxtaposed. The spatial scales of global crises, the temporality of millennia into the future and past and the quantitative dimensions of pollutants and destruction are hardly imaginable, let alone perceptible. The point of no return, when Earth's equilibrium catastrophically tips, exceeds human imagination. Thus, unreadability is inherent to the Anthropocene.[15]

Guariglia evokes unreadability through form. The monumental white in *Jacobshavn I* also evokes unreadability by swallowing details and dazzling the viewer. The dominance of white recalls the ubiquity and therefore the ungraspable nature of the Anthropocene.[16]

Latour also notes that previous concepts of nature and Earth deviate from reality, as symbolised by globes and maps.[17] Latour sees this deviation as a hallmark of modernity and defines it as the state in which every connection between our imagination

15 Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 128-31; Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge. The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 7.

16 Moritz Baßler and Heinz Krügh, *Gegenwartsästhetik* (Constance: Wallstein, 2021), 5.

17 Latour deconstructs the idea of the globe in detail. See chapters one and two of Bruno Latour, *Kampf um Gaia. Acht Vorträge über das neue Klimaregime* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020).

Fig. 2
Detail: Justin Brice Guariglia: *JACOBSHAVN I*, 2015/2016, Acrylic, Polystyrene Panel, 325,12 x 4,44 cm, Private Collection. (reproduced with artist's permission)

of the world and its reality independent of us is severed. In this state, humans have lost the ability to perceive true nature.[18] It has become unfathomable, just like *Jacobshavn I*.

Interconnectedness

Paradoxically, the disorientation and unreadability connect the viewer to the work. The unfinished cognitive and perceptual processes demand resolution. The work appears simultaneously near and distant, familiar and strange. This dis:connectivity is also present in the Anthropocene discourse.

Recognising the catastrophic consequences of dichotomising nature in the 20th century, James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis developed the Gaia hypothesis in the 1970s.[19] This introduces a holistic understanding of nature, radically departing from modern dualism.[20] With *Gaia*, the Greek deity and personification of Earth, they symbolically refer to nature as a network of all organisms, including humans and animals in addition to rivers, mountains, and the micro- and macrocosmos. Nature is therefore a planetary collaborative-processual network that integrates humans as one part among others. Humans are not outside nature but an integral part of it. We are deeply connected and existentially bound to the network, and the network's existence depends on our prudent interaction with the environment.[21] Hence, a posthumanist image of humanity and nature emerges. Nature is no longer the other, the observed and the foreign; humans are part of it. The separation of subject and object collapses, forming the conceptual basis of the Anthropocene.[22]

Bruno Latour, building on the Gaia hypothesis, refers to this understanding of nature as *the Terrestrial*. He implies reciprocity

18 Latour and Weibel, 'Disconnected', 75.

19 The term first appeared in James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, 'Atmospheric homeostasis by and for the biosphere: the gaia hypothesis', *Tellus* 26, no. 1-2 (1973).

20 Modernity and the present are characterised by dichotomous natural-aesthetic ideas. These are largely rooted in ancient philosophy, from which the separation of spiritual-inner subject and material-outer object is derived. These tendencies resonate with modern subject-object dualism. On the one hand, the subject interacts with nature. The subject, therefore, intends, reflects and acts largely according to reason. At the same time, the subject is affective and can act irrationally. As an active entity, it confronts material, object-like nature and defines it as the passive outside itself. Nature is thus understood as intentionless, unconscious, continuous, calculable and technically manipulable. This dualism is general in application and Western in origin. Eva Horn, 'Challenges for an Aesthetics of the Anthropocene', in *The Anthropocentric Turn: The Interplay between Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Responses to a New Age*, ed. Gabriele Dürbeck and Philip Hüpkes (New York: Routledge, 2020).

21 Latour and Weibel, 'Gaia', 166. Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki, 'Introduction: Towards a Symbiosis of Posthumanism and Environmental Humanities or Paving Narratives for the Symbiocene', in *Symbiotic Posthumanist Ecologies in Western Literature, Philosophy and Art: Towards Theory and Practice*, ed. Peggy Karpouzou and Nikoleta Zampaki (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2023).

22 Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 28.

between humans and the world, positioning humans as actors among many equivalent actors in the network. Humans are not the counterpart of the world but immanent within it. The goal of Latour's anthropology of modernity is to dissolve the separation of humans from nature, revealing it as an ideological construction.[23] Interconnectedness is thus an essential component of both the Anthropocene discourse and Guariglia's work. The complex and seemingly insoluble entanglement of viewer and artwork reflects the dis:connective human-nature relationship advocated by Latour.

Uncanniness

Disorienting, unreadable, disconnected and yet connected, *Jacobshavn I* evokes discomfort and uncanniness. It is not the familiar and comfortable image of nature emphasising beauty; it is uncanny and strange. As Beatrice Galilee, curator at the Metropolitan Museum, describes Guariglia's works, they are 'beautiful but terrifying'.[24]

This uncanniness is also present in the Anthropocene discourse. Thomas Friedman refers to this relationship with an incomprehensible world we are destroying 'global weirding'.[25] The writer Amitav Ghosh says nature now reciprocates the human gaze, becoming alive in an uncanny yet familiar way.[26] Thus, in the Anthropocene, humans share their consciousness uncannily with other beings, perhaps even with the planet itself. Humans are inseparably connected to nature, so we can no longer retreat into our subjectivity or reduce nature to objectivity. Horn, invoking Kant, calls this the 'Sublime in the Anthropocene'.[27] It is a disturbing intimacy with a world that can no longer be grasped solely as the human lifeworld.[28] Moreover, the sheer complexity and the real possibility of global environmental collapse are in themselves frightening and uncanny. Bruno Latour also perceives the uncanny in the Anthropocene, as evidenced in his account of flying over Baffin Island. He writes, 'In the age of the Anthropocene, all the dreams of die-hard environmentalists, of experiencing how humans, by now paying more attention to nature, would be healed of their political disputes, have burst. We are all irrevocably entering a simultaneously post-natural, post-human, and post-epistemological epoch!'.[29]

23 Kuchenbuch, 'Bruno Latours Anthropozän', 380.
24 Ted Loos, 'A Man on an Eco-Mission in Mixed Media', *New York Times* (New York), 10 October 2017.
25 Thomas Friedman, 'Global Weirding Is Here', *New York Times* (New York), 17 February 2010.
26 Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 91.
27 Horn and Bergthaller, *Anthropozän. Zur Einführung*, 131.
28 Horn and Bergthaller, Anthropozän. Zur Einführung, 129-132.
29 Latour, *Kampf um Gaia*, 248. Author's translation.

Materiality and spatiality

Guariglia also realises a concrete understanding of spatiality. Initially, he depicts space downward from the sky to the Earth's surface, before creating a second, new spatiality. Printing with heavy acrylic paint and meticulous work with gesso, acrylic and polystyrene, a unique material spatiality emerges on the surface. Thus, Guariglia first appropriates landscape photographically and then bases a new space on it. The materials he uses are highly anthropogenic. Plastic and acrylic hardly decompose; they are products of the Anthropocene. The work embodies a material dialectic, where industrial materials depict natural glaciers. Guariglia assumes the role of natural forces with his art, creating and shaping landscapes. This act recalls humanity's role in the Anthropocene.[30]

Latour also considers traditional concepts of nature as constructs and instead proposes a new concept that, while just as constructed, more accurately represents the character of nature: the critical zone. Like Guariglia, he introduces a new planetary spatiality. Latour defines the critical zone as the space from the lower atmosphere to the ground with its vegetation.[31] The globe model, most popularly captured in the *Blue Marble* (Fig. 3), is thus the counter-model to the critical zone. Nature as a globe is merely an insufficient dataset that that lacks an experiential perspective.[32] It is a mere 'geometrization of the immeasurable'.[33] In contrast, the critical zone is where life occurs, which Latour describes as 'everything we care for, everything we have encountered'.[34] The critical zone frees the imagination from the Blue-Marble conception of nature and returns the actual human lifeworld back to experiential surfaces. It is a new understanding of the planet as 'skin of the living earth',[35] recalling Guariglia's model of nature. While the critical zone is heterogeneous and dynamic, it does not totalise nature. Similarly, the cracks and surfaces of *Jacobshavn I* are heterogeneous, dynamic and resist totalisation. Moreover, the critical zone, given environmental destruction, is uncanny and disturbing.[36]

Photography also plays a crucial role. Guariglia's starting point, NASA's aerial photograph of a landscape, epitomises the scientific-objectifying gaze on nature. This is transformed by reworking the surface with plastic, acrylic and gesso into a new space and an indefinitely durable object. Simultaneously,

30 Baßler and Krügh, *Gegenwartsästhetik*, 214.
31 Kofman, 'Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher'.
32 Latour and Weibel, 'Seven Objections against Landing on Earth', 14.
33 Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären II: Globen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 47. Author's translation.
34 Kofman, 'Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher'.
35 Latour and Weibel, 'Disconnected', 13.
36 Bruno Latour, *Kampf um Gaia. Acht Vorträge über das Neue Klimaregime* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2020), 334.

the work induces the opposite effect of a scientific photograph: it disorients, defies legibility, is uncanny. Guariglia reveals the fallacy and consequences of attempting to subsume nature under a scientific, binary perspective, while simultaneously proposing a counter-design. Guariglia demonstrates that nature in the Anthropocene has become unreadable, and the unreadability prompts reflection on what is seen. He gazes on the critical zone, confronting the viewer with the living skin of Gaia. Moreover, landscape emerges, according to W.J.T. Mitchell, as an identity-forming, dynamic process.[37] A semiotic and hermeneutic reading reveals it to be a construct, a dialectic between the viewer and nature.

Conclusion

Guariglia's work reconceives nature and humanity. Initially, it conveys the status quo in the Anthropocene. It reflects the state of nature and its impact on our understanding of nature and humanity. Thus, the work rejects dichotomous understandings of nature and conveys a counter-image: interconnected, fragile yet sublime. The work visualises Gaia in the sense of the critical zone, evoking new experiences and awareness.

For Bruno Latour, art is a crucial mediator of his ideas. According to Latour, the dogma of modernity has deprived us of the concepts necessary to transcend old thought patterns and to experience nature as a critical zone. Thus, art and science make the critical zone more tangible in the Anthropocene. Both pursuits complement each other: while the arts aid comprehension, science predicts and elucidates. Beyond Latour, art plays a pivotal role in the Anthropocene discourse. If the crisis-driven transformation of the environment in the Anthropocene is rooted our understanding of and relationship to nature, as conveyed through art, then our worldview can only shift through new representations of nature.

Art alone cannot avert climate catastrophes, but it can critically reflect on the Anthropocene. Art can disrupt structures and imagine alternatives through aesthetics. Treating the Anthropocene artistically does not mean resolving aporias but making them visible. Curator Tim Wride describes Guariglia's works as follows: 'The work is not didactic. [...] The statement is completely enmeshed in the materiality of it. The work creates opportunities for dialogue. Scientists want to explain, while artists want to ask questions'.[38] Art has the potential to mediate a new understanding and relation between human and nature, maybe one more holistic and connected.

Fig. 3
***Blue Marble* (AS17-148-22727), 1972, recorded by Apollo 17** (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Marble#/media/Datei:The_Earth_seen_from_Apollo_17.jpg)

37 W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Introduction', in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1-5.
38 Loos, 'A Man on an Eco-Mission'.

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Fellows corner

Alumnus but not forgotten: an interview with Arnab Dey

When were you at global dis:connect, and what did you work on while here?

I was at global dis:connect from January till July 2023. While there, I started work on my second book on the history of industrial disease and labour health in India between 1880 and 1950. This monograph examines the history, politics and medical origins of numerous ailments that beset working-class members of India's industrial enterprises, small and big. Though largely forgotten, this project reminds us of the enormous human costs – and silences – of globalisation and global history.

Where do you work now, and are you still dealing with dis:connectivity?

I am back at my home institution (State University of New York at Binghamton) and continue to research labour health. This project has advanced to include questions of law, labour union activity and vernacular histories of occupational disease. I am still very much interested and invested in questions of dis:connectivity that commenced at global dis:connect. The study of embodied industrial disease (largely suffered in private and away from the public gaze) reminds us repeatedly that global capital and processes of globalisation cannot be fully grasped without also understanding what they hide (or refuse to let us see) and what they disrupt.

Fig. 01
Arnab Dey

What text – whether a book or article – have you read recently that particularly impressed you?

I recently read Salman Rushdie's *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder* (Random House, 2024) in one sitting. A riveting work of private and public introspection, it offers a thoughtful account of how to navigate loss, despair and political convictions in a deeply polarising world.

Which song could be the sound-track for your time at gdc?

With appropriate tweaks and contextual changes, of course, but Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes's *(I've Had) The Time of My Life* (1987) pretty much sums up the song for my time at the gd:c!!

Given the choice of anyone dead or alive, or even a fictional character, whom would you want as a dinner guest?

I would certainly love to have both Calvin *and* Hobbes (the furry version) at my dinner table if I had the chance! Given their wicked profundity and dark humour, it would be interesting to have their perspective on our contemporary world and prognosis for the future …

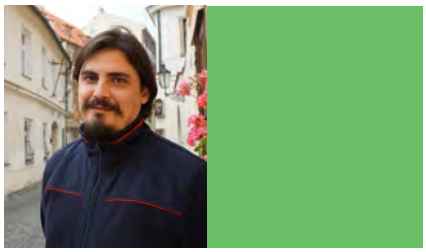
Fellow travellers

Shane Boyle

Shane Boyle is a senior lecturer in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary University of London. His research focuses on logistics, Marxism, and performance history. He has published widely on the political economy of art, including the book *The Arts of Logistics: Artistic Production in Supply Chain Capitalism* (Stanford University Press 2024). Shane holds a PhD in performance studies from UC Berkeley and co-edited *Postdramatic Theatre and Form* (Bloomsbury 2019). He is also a member of the Performance and Political Economy research collective.

As a fellow at global dis:connect, Shane is writing a monograph on how the art world has become entangled in the planetary mine of supply chain capitalism. In addition to detailing the ways that contemporary museums, galleries and theatres depend on rare metals and mineral resources, Shane's research surveys the efforts of artists since the logistics revolution to blockade and sabotage extractive infrastructures.

Claiton Marcio da Silva



Claiton Marcio da Silva is an associate professor of history at the Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Brazil, with a PhD in the history of science. In 2023, he published *The Making of Modern Agriculture: Nelson Rockefeller's American International Association for Economic and Social Development (AIA) in Latin America (1946-1968),* addressing U.S. private diplomacy during the Cold War. He also co-edited *The Age of the Soybean* (White Horse Press, 2022) with Claudio de Majo.

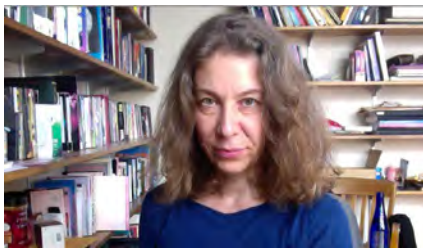
At global dis:connect, Claiton Marcio is exploring soybean production and exports as a fundamental dis:connectivity in globalisation, with a focus on political and socioenvironmental aspects. While historiography on the topic approaches these experiences of technological innovation and deforestation in a disconnected way, Claiton is proposing a transdisciplinary ethno-historical approach, connecting global experiences and arguing that the detours in this process (cheating, smuggling of inputs, etc.) are fundamental, not exceptional, parts of the process.

Işıl Eğrikavuk

Işıl Eğrikavuk holds an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and a Ph.D. in communication from Istanbul Bilgi University. Işıl has worked at the Berlin University of Arts (UdK) since 2017 and was the co-winner of Turkey's Full Art Prize in 2012. She founded the other garden, a research space that focuses on ecology, diversity, inclusivity and radical care in the UdK.
Işıl has participated in numerous international exhibitions and residencies and has published widely. Recent exhibitions and venues include Kunstraum Kreuzberg Bethanien, La Casa Encendida, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Photography (2022) and the 11th Istanbul Biennial.

Işıl's past research has been on how to create new forms of interconnectedness among different communities in the context of the arts. The term *detour*, however, implies an unwanted, unexpected, longer or delayed path that is often not desired. Işıl approaches *detour* through antagonism in a beyond-human community.

Arnika Fuhrmann



Arnika Fuhrmann is an interdisciplinary scholar of Thailand working at the intersection of the country's aesthetic and political modernities. She authored *Ghostly Desires: Queer Sexuality and Vernacular Buddhism in Contemporary Thai Cinema and Teardrops of Time: Buddhist Aesthetics in the Poetry of Angkarn Kallayanapong*. She is currently a professor of Asian studies and comparative literature at Cornell University.

Annika's project investigates the temporal properties of the digital and draws the counterintuitive properties of digital mediation in relation to the dis:connectivity of a global gaze on Asian political spheres. It examines the temporal efficacy of features unique to the digital sphere and inquires into the counterintuitive ways in which contexts of political constraint shape and facilitate political expression. She's interrogating assumptions about the teleologies of progressive politics and investigating digital media across political fields and national boundaries in a highly globalised Asia.

Mark Häberlein

Mark Häberlein is a professor of early modern history at the University of Bamberg. His research focusses on the economic, social, urban and cultural history of the early modern period and on the history of North America and the Atlantic world. Mark holds a PhD from the University of Augsburg. He was Feodor Lynen Fellow at Pennsylvania State University in 1999-2000 and a DFG Heisenberg Fellow from 2001-2004. He has been a member of the Academia Europaea since 2022 and is chairman of the Gesellschaft für Globalgeschichte e.V.

The project deals with the intensifying relations between Central Europe and North America in the 18th century. More than 100,000 Germans and Swiss emigrated to the New World by 1800, and 30,000 German soldiers were deployed in the American War of Independence. By means of transatlantic migration, religious minorities and dissidents from Central Europe were 'exported' to North America. Secular networks of merchants, ship-owners and business travellers as well as religious communication and support networks developed. In addition, an independent German-American culture emerged in Pennsylvania.

Andrea Kifyasi

Andrea Azizi Kifyasi is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Andrea specialises in medical history and is interested in China's medical aid to post-colonial African countries and medical diplomacy. He earned his PhD at the Department of History, University of Basel, in 2021. His latest journal article examined the effectiveness of exchanges of medical knowledge across the Global South using case studies of the Chinese-funded medical projects in Tanzania from 1968 to the 1990s.

At global dis:onnect, Andrea is studying the history of China's medical assistance in post-colonial Tanzania, particularly the implications of Chinese medical aid in the development of Tanzania's health sector under the discourse of South-South cooperation. He's exploring how China's medical assistance reflected the Southern agenda of promoting self-reliance and lessening Northern dominance in medical aid and knowledge in the South. The ensuing book will touch on South-South cooperation as well as economic, political and knowledge entanglements in bilateral relationships among countries of the Global South.

Ulrike Lindner

Ulrike Lindner is a professor of modern history at the University of Cologne. She has held visiting positions at Cambridge, the EUI Florence and Science Po Paris. Her research interests lie in comparative, colonial and global history. She has worked on the comparative history of European empires, particularly British and German colonies in Africa, issues of knowledge transfer between empires and postcolonial themes. More recently, she has dealt with questions of bonded labour and the histories of plantation.

Ulrike is currently focusing on colonial labour migration in Africa. During her fellowship at global dis:connect, she's exploring why the topic has received less attention than the dominant migration narratives of the 19th and 20th century. Secondly, she will investigate the concrete agency of African migrant workers who tried to be deviant and to use 'detours' to resist their integration into the capitalist market economy of the new colonial rulers in Africa at the end of the 19th century.

Gerald Siegmund

Gerald is a professor of applied theatre studies at the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen. He studied theatre, English and French literature at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, where he also obtained his PhD with a thesis on theatre as memory. His research focuses on forms of contemporary theatre, dance, performance, aesthetics, theories of memory and the intermediality of theatre in relation to the visual arts. Gerald has published more than 100 articles on contemporary dance and theatre performance. His most recent book bore the title *Theater- und Tanzperformance zur Einführung*.

Gerald's research project explores the connection of body, landscape and memory. It takes up recent developments in memory and trauma studies that view processes of commemoration as dynamic, transformative and transmedial phenomena. It shifts the body into the centre of investigation and attempts to locate it in a commemorative happening that, in the theatre, is also always an event, a connex of performers and audience. With reference to the (traumatised) body, memory is not a foundational moment of identity, but functions as a moment of disruption and as work on absence.

Julian Warner

Julian Warner is an artist and curator. He is the current artistic director of the Brechtfestival Augsburg and a performer and musician going by the stage name of Fehler Kuti. He is the editor of an anthology on questions regarding decolonial critique in *Germany After Europe. Beiträge zur dekolonialen Kritik* (Verbrecher Verlag, 2021) and was a visiting professor for dramaturgy at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design in 2022-23.

During his fellowship at global dis:connect, Julian will critically reflect on his curatorial practice, which positions itself at the intersection of globally circulating symbolic goods and locally specific contexts. Which contradictions and conflicts arise when international artists and projects engage with local institutions, audiences, and struggles? How may we further our understanding of such overdetermined constellations?

Cover image: Florian Bachmeier, The Mediterranean as seen from the coast of Lesbos, 2017, photograph.
Back cover: Matthias Schmidt. 'Anodorhynchus Maximiliani. Tab. XI'. In *Avium species novae* by Johann Baptist von Spix, 1824.

static: thoughts and research from global dis:connect

Vol. 3, No. 2,
November 2024
ISSN: 2751-1626

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Website:
www.globaldisconnect.org
Published biannually

Webspace:
https://static.ub.uni-muenchen.de

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Federal Ministry of Education and Research

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