

The Seventh Man: Migration, Politics and Aesthetics

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Istanbul in the 1960s. Hundreds of people line up in front of the liaison offices of the German Federal Employment office in Istanbul and Ankara every day, waiting for a job in a German company. The people who were applying for jobs first had to undergo a medical examination and a test of their technical abilities. If they were successful, they got on the train, and traveled for 50 hours all the way up to Germany. At the end of their exhausting journey, they all arrived at Munich main station, track number 11, where they were welcomed by a Turkish interpreter. After a short break and a meal they were accompanied to their final destinations in different German cities. That is how it started...¹

One of the early books to narrate the experiences of these guest workers in Europe was a collaborative project between John Berger and Jean Mohr entitled *A Seventh Man: Migrant Workers in Europe* (1975). Berger's essay, divided into sections of departure, work, and return, explains, in a poetic Marxist tone, why and under which conditions these peasants from underdeveloped countries such as Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia had to immigrate to another country, and the ways in which they survived in Europe as "mere cogs" of the international division of labor. Mohr's photographs accompany the fragmented stories of the immigrants and show how they turned their heads away from the camera while they were undergoing medical examination with

¹ Text taken from the website of DOMiT –Das Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland (The Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany) See: www.domit.de

numbers written on their chests; the railways they left and arrived at; how they constructed roads, tunnels or buildings, and worked in the factories; where they slept and ate; how they stared and waited. In "A Note for the Reader" Berger writes that the book concerns a dream/nightmare. He contemplates:

By what right can we call the lived experience of others a dream/nightmare? Not because the facts are so oppressive that they can weakly be termed nightmarish; nor because hopes can weakly be termed dreams. In a dream the dreamer wills, acts, reacts, speaks, and yet submits to the unfolding of a story which he scarcely influences. The dream happens to him. Afterwards he may ask another to interpret it. But sometimes a dreamer tries to break his dream by deliberately waking himself up. This book represents such an intention within a dream which the subject of the book and each of us is dreaming (13).

The metaphor of a dream/nightmare dreamt by everyone constitutes the narrative of the book. The seventh man cannot escape from the dream because his migration is like "an event in a dream dreamt by another," everything he does "is determined by the needs of the dreamer's mind" (43). Even his final return is mythic. When he goes back he realizes that "an assured place for him no longer exists in his village" (221). This is why "two or three years after his final return he or other members of his family will be compelled to go abroad once more" legally or illegally (219). His is a perpetual dream/nightmare.

As a figure in a dream the seventh man is lonely, cannot understand the language, and cannot speak even though he utters words. Levent Soysal argues that the migrant in "A Seventh Man" is "not heard and seen, remaining invisible beyond walls that separate him from European imagination" (2003: 497). He is a figure of absence of speech and gesture. He is utterly silent:

The written letters of the other language are jumbled together to make silent sounds.

SCHOKOLADE IST GUT!

The silence is his. Whatever they are saying, he, with the silent sounds in his head, is going to nod. (Berger and Mohr, 1975: 66)

In his 1990 essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha returns to John Berger's "A Seventh Man." In this seminal essay, Bhabha gives a critique of the essentialist reading of nationhood and argues that nation is a narrative written in "intermittent time, and interstitial space, that emerges as a structure of undecidability at the frontiers of cultural hybridity" (1990: 312). He argues that the uncanny moments of enunciation of cultural difference at the limits of the nation's narrative scatter the homogenous and horizontal view of society based on unified national space and time. It is through the "foreignness of language," a notion that Bhabha borrows from Walter Benjamin, that it becomes "possible to inscribe the specific locality of cultural systems — their incommensurable differences — and through that apprehension of difference, to perform the act of translation" (315).

In the beginning of the section "The Foreignness of Languages," which deals with the enigma of language through the figure of the migrant, Bhabha states that he must give way to the *vox populi*:

[...] a relatively unspoken tradition of the people of the pagus — colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities — wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation (315).

They are those who speak the "encrypted discourse of the melancholic and the migrant" across the accumulation of the

history of the West. They voice the lost object — the national *Heim* — and this lost object is written across the bodies of the people, as “it repeats in the silence that speaks the foreignness of language” (315). The emblematic figure of this silent speech is none other than the Turkish worker in Germany. Bhabha quotes Berger extensively:

.... The migrant's intentionality is permeated by historical necessities of which neither he nor anybody he meets is aware. That is why it is as if his life were dreamt by another [...] They watch the gestures made and learn to imitate them [...] The rate of work allows no time to prepare for the gesture. The body loses its mind in the gesture. How opaque the disguise of words.... He treated the sounds of the unknown language as if they were silence. To break through his silence. He learnt twenty words of the new language. But to his amazement at first, their meaning changed as he spoke them. He asked for coffee. What the words signified to the barman was that he was asking for coffee in a bar where he should not be asking for coffee. He learnt girl. What the word meant when he used it, was that he was a randy dog. Is it possible to see through the opaqueness of the words? (315-16)

For Bhabha, this silent Other of gesture and failed speech, who is without the language that bridges knowledge and act, “leads the life of a double, the automaton” (316). The speech he utters thwarts understanding because it remains “eerily untranslated in the racist site of its enunciation.” According to Bhabha the Turk as a dog is a complex form of social fantasy, an axis of identification — the desire of a man (white) for a man (black) — that underwrites that utterance and produces the paranoid “delusion of reference,” which the man-dog confronts with his own alterity, his foreignness. In this sense, the seventh man becomes what Freud calls the “haphazard member of the herd,” the Stranger, whose “languageless presence evokes an archaic anxiety and aggressivity by impeding the search for narcissistic love-objects in which the subject can rediscover himself, and upon which the group's *amour propre* is based” (316).

The immigrant's desire to "imitate" language makes present the opacity of language, its untranslatable residue and it produces a void in the articulation of the social space while the racist fantasy, which disavows the ambivalence of its desire, opens up another void in the present. The nation's space and time becomes ambivalent through the migrant's silence that elicits "those racist fantasies of purity and persecution." In the process, "by which the paranoid position finally voids the place from where it speaks," Bhabha contends, we begin to see "another history of the German language" (317). This dream/nightmare experience of the Turkish *gastarbeiter* represents what Bhabha calls "the radical incommensurability of translation," in contrast to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, which attempts to redefine the boundaries of the Western nation, so that the "foreignness of languages" becomes the inescapable cultural condition for the enunciation of the mother tongue (317).

Some critics working on German-Turkish migrant literature or cinema were aggravated by Homi Bhabha's rendering of "the Turkish migrant worker in Germany as an incommensurable, alienated, speechless victim without any voice" (Göktürk, 2002: 4; Soysal 2003).² They argued, against Bhabha's portrayal, that even the works of the so-called *Gastarbeiterliterature* proved that "the opaque Other has broken its silence and begun to speak back to the West... in speaking 'our' language, it has begun to speak *back*" (Teraoka, 1987: 80).³

² See also Leslie A. Adelson, (1994), "Opposing Oppositions: Turkish-German Questions in Contemporary German Studies," *German Studies Review* 17, 305–30.

³ The most famous first-generation writers of the so-called *gastarbeiterliterature* are Aras Ören and Yüksel Pazarkaya. The second-generation writers of minority, migrant or intercultural literature are Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Feridun Zaimoglu and Zafer Senocak, to name but a few. The works of these writers not only translated the German language (the most provocative example is *Kanak Sprak* (1995) by Feridun Zaimoğlu) but also German national

In contrast to critics like Göktürk and Soysal, my problem with Bhabha's text does not stem from his rendering of the Turkish migrant as a speechless victim when he has already become an articulated writer. What is problematic for me is Bhabha's conceptualization of the silent speech of the migrant representing the "radical incommensurability of translation" merely in psychological terms. For him, the silent double gives rise to uncanny feelings, invokes archaic anxiety and aggression, a paranoid position of "delusion of reference" upon which the group's *amour propre* is based. This, according to Bhabha, is a complex form of social/racist fantasy that is evoked by the failed speech of the migrant. In contrast to Bhabha, I will argue that the notion of "the radical incommensurability of translation" should be seen as a form of political "fantasy," which, as I will suggest, forecloses the realm of politics.

The speech of the "uncounted"

While Bhabha flashed his reader back to the unspoken tradition of the *pagus*, I suggest that we go back first to Aristotle and then to Ancient Rome following political philosopher Jacques Rancière's *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (1995). Rancière starts his book by disagreeing with Aristotle's understanding of the "political animal" based on the idea that "man alone of the animals possesses speech" while the "mere voice....can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well" (Aristotle, *Politics* I, quoted in Rancière, 1999: 1). According to Rancière, in Aristotle's "limpid demonstration several points remain obscure" (1999: 2) such as Aristotle's speaking animal "is split from the beginning," and he is already decentered (Chambers, 2005: par.17). There is a fundamental difference between

memory (Zafer Senocak's novel *Perilous Kinship*) even though the Turks and the Germans are not historically bound by a colonial relationship as in the case of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*.

“speaking” language and “possessing” it, as the possession of language is not a physical capacity that separates men from animals but a “symbolic division between the order of speech and that of bodies” (Rancière, 2004: 5).

In “Ten Theses on Politics,” Rancière asks:

[H]ow one can be sure that the human animal mouthing a noise in front of you is actually voicing an utterance rather than merely expressing a state of being? If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing them as the bearers of politicalness, by not understanding what they say, by not hearing that it is an utterance coming out of their mouths (2001, par. 23).

Rancière contends that traditionally it had been enough not to hear what came out of the mouths of the majority of human beings — slaves, women, workers, colonized peoples— as language and, instead, to hear only cries of hunger, rage, or hysteria in order to deny them the quality of being political animals (2004: 5). What Bhabha calls the radical incommensurability of translation relates to such preclusion of the migrant from being a political animal possessing a language. It is through such a denial that the migrant’s utterance of “girl” is taken to mean that he is a randy dog. What is seen through the opaqueness of words is a political “fantasy” that adorns the migrant only with a “sort of bellowing” which is “a sign of need and not a manifestation of intelligence” (2004: 5). Such an understanding reverses Bhabha’s argument: it is not that the migrant is deprived of language or gesture (or, for that matter, of the capacity of translation) but he is not recognized as possessing speech, which, actually, is the denial of the migrant as a political being.

This “fantasy” makes the speech of some people unheard, ununderstandable and untranslatable in relation to those who have to power to speak or power over language. Rancière gives a historical example to make his point about possessing and speaking the language and the political

implication of their separation. He recalls the plebeian secession on the Aventine Hill in Ancient Rome — as it was rewritten by the French thinker Ballanche in 1830 — when the plebeians demanded a treaty with the patricians which was denied on the basis that plebeians did not have human speech, and they could not give them what they did not have. Rancière writes,

[...] in order to be audibly understood and visibly recognized as legitimate speaking subjects, the plebeians must not only argue their position but must also *construct the scene of argumentation in such a manner that the patricians might recognize it as a world in common*. The principle of political interlocution is thus disagreement; that is, it is the discordant understanding of both the objects of reference and the speaking subjects. In order to enter into political exchange, it becomes necessary to invent the scene upon which spoken words may be audible, in which objects may be visible, and individuals themselves may be recognized (2000: 116, my emphasis).

According to Rancière, the creation of such a common polemical space requires a novel perceptual universe, one where those who were previously “regarded as not speaking the language prove that their mouths do, indeed, emit common speech” (2006). For Rancière, politics proper consists of the construction of a polemical scene by means of speech acts articulating a common wrong — concerning what place belongs or does not belong to it and who is able or unable to make enunciations and demonstration about the common. This situation concerns disagreement, defined as “a determined kind of speech situation: one in which one of the interlocutors at once understands and does not understand what the other is saying (1999: x).⁴ In disagreement “discussion of an argument comes down to a dispute over the

⁴ The French term *Mésentente*, that is not translatable into English, means both “the fact of not hearing, of not understanding” and “quarrel, disagreement.”

object of the discussion and over the capacity of those who are making an object of it" (1999: xii). Such conflict disrupts the logic of *police order*, a term Rancière uses to refer to the general law determining "the distribution of parts and roles in a community as well as its form of exclusion," which is, first and foremost, an organization of "bodies based on a communal distribution of the sensible" (2004a: 88). The essence of the police order is a certain distribution of the sensible, which is a system of coordinates "defining modes of being, doing, making, and communicating that establishes the borders between the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the sayable and the unsayable" (88). It is a certain manner of partitioning the sensible based on the principle of saturation; it is a mode of the partition of the sensible that recognizes neither lack nor supplement.

Politics disturbs this order by introducing either a supplement or a lack that is not recognized by the police order by those who have no part, those who are uncounted within the existing system. It persists as long as there is a dissensus about the givens of a particular situation, of what is seen and what might be said, on the question of who is qualified to see or say what is given. It opens a gap in the sensible through the "emergence of a claim to enfranchisement by a group that has been so radically excluded that its inclusion demands the transformation of the rules of inclusion" (Martin, 2005: 39).

The political "fantasy" I was referring to in relation to Bhabha's term "the radical incommensurability of translation" can be related to the logic of the police that distributes lots in such a way as to give each person his or her *place* in the order of things, a place tied to identity. The migrant without the language belongs to those who remain invisible, inaudible, those who are uncounted and have no part. He is the underdog. However, such a relegation of the migrant to not speaking a language does not reflect "the obstinacy of the dominant or their ideological blindness," but, rather, it expresses "the sensory order that organizes their domination"

(Rancière, 1999: 24). It is a sensory illusion. In spite of, or due to, this sensory illusion, politics exists because those who “have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation” (1999: 27). This confrontation makes visible that which had no reason to be seen and it lodges one world into another that creates “a shared world the other does not see.” It is “the construction of a paradoxical world that relates two separate worlds.” (Rancière, 2001: par. 24)

New gatherings

Following Rancière’s ideas summarized above, I would like to discuss whether or the ways in which the figure of the seventh man would emerge as the dissident who possesses and voices his speech so as to bring about a disagreement that creates a common polemical scene in our so-called post-political times. I will argue that the *gastarbeiter* figure of Berger and Bhabha has been replaced (or has to be replaced) by that of the “illegal(ized) immigrant.”⁵ My suggestion, firstly, stems from the *fact* that the figure of the *gastarbeiter* as an empirical, juridical and social term does not exist since the formal guest worker programs had been canceled following the oil crisis in 1973. Secondly, those who arrived as part of the bilateral agreements, as well as their descendents, have been incorporated in the (failed) multicultural “order” as guests (paradoxically and welcome or not) and given their places, roles and status. However, in contradiction to this supposedly

⁵ The term illegal(ized) migrant refers to people who are anything but a homogeneous group. What unites them is the fact that they have falsified residency papers or possess none at all. But the ways in which one can become illegal and its duration vary enormously. We can, perhaps, identify certain “categories,” such as, rejected asylum seekers, young migrants (those, for example, who had been living or were born in a host country but become illegal due to a criminal act) and illegalized working migrants, those either enter the country illegally or violate their visas. (See, <http://www.noborder.org/without/germany.html#six>)

stable and closed off order the process of immigration is still going on as people illegally cross the borders of Europe everyday, as “we speak.” It is, I contend, the so-called illegal immigrant through her multiple displacements or internment in deportation camps who reenacts the precarious everyday experience of the previous *gastarbeiter*, albeit under different circumstances.⁶ They are invisible — after all who can tell apart an illegal from a legal immigrant — segregated and they wander around as supposedly speechless victims. However, they are hyper-visible in official and right wing discourse as a threat to nation’s well-being and raise anxiety and racial aggressivity in their absence.

In the opening of “DissemiNation,” Bhabha writes that, having seen/experienced migration himself, he has lived “the moment of scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering” (291). He continues:

Gatherings of exiles and *émigrés* and refugees; gathering on the edge of “foreign” cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafés of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language; gathering the signs of approval

⁶The fundamental difference, besides the legal status, would be that the *gastarbeiter* was the working figure of the Fordist system while the illegal immigrant operates within a post-Fordist system which requires her to be flexible worker “without papers.” Also the *gastarbeiter* was a figure of mobility between two nations (mother and host countries) whereas the illegals are forced to move transnationally. The fundamental reason for the this transnational movement is the regulation of the “safe third country” — according to which a refugee who enters the EU by way of a safe third country (i.e. one in which he or she is not subject to political persecution) may be deported to that country. This has led to so-called “chain deportation” because the safe third countries that surround Europe are increasingly declaring neighboring countries to be safe third countries as well. In this sense, the neighboring countries of the EU, such as Turkey, has become ‘transit countries’ populated with illegal immigrants. For an interview with Behzad Yaghmanian on illegal immigrants in Turkey see, “Urban Space and Illegal Immigrants” http://tanpelin.blogspot.com/2005_12_01_tanpelin_archive.html

and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also the gathering of people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status — the genealogy of that lonely figure that John Berger named the seventh man (1990: 291).

Let me introduce another form of gathering, that of the illegal immigrants. Six years after the publication of “DissemiNation,” in the summer of 1996, 300 African illegal immigrants occupied the St. Bernard church in Paris for several months. Some of them were asylum seekers and some were long-term working residents of France whose status had been made illegal as a result of legislative changes.⁷ The event was considered a turn in French national discussion about migration policies and the presence of what traditionally has been called “clandestine migrants.” Those who occupied the public space declared themselves *sans-papiers* (literally, without papers) and asked for “papers for all.” Mireille Rosello argues that even though the occupation ended with a police eviction the movement achieved, at least, a symbolic victory of replacing the previously common name *clandestin* with *sans-papiers* (2001: 2). She states that the *sans-papiers* struggle created “a space of sociological, legal, and philosophical debate in the very heart of the French capital” (2) and made the French citizens question the relationship between “the city and the nation, between the refugee and the law, between rights and equity” (5).

⁷ In 1993 the so-called *Pasqua* laws reflecting the French government’s anti-immigration were introduced. For socio-cultural implications of the *sans-papiers* movement in France see, Rosello (2001 and 1998). Also see, Anne McNevin 2006, “Political Belonging in a Neoliberal Era: The Struggle of the Sans-Papiers,” *Citizenship Studies*, 10 (2), 135–151; Peter Nyers, 2003. “Abject Cosmopolitanism: the politics of protection in the anti-deportation Movement,” *Third World Quarterly*, 24 (6), 1069–1093; and Etienne Balibar et al. 1999. *Sans-papiers: l’archaïsme fatal*. Paris: Découverte

The act of the “illegals” naming themselves *sans-papiers* is comparable to Rancière account of 19th century revolutionary Auguste Blanqui’s self-proclamation as “a proletarian” in response to a prosecutor seeking to “reduce him to a social class or a profession” (1999: 37). By doing so, Rancière argues, Blanqui gave the word proletarian a different meaning and inscribed the uncoun­ted in a space where they are countable as uncoun­ted (39). Similarly, in replacing the xenophobic term clandestine, which addressed the illegal as the enemy and the criminal, with *sans-papiers*, the movement not only declared a membership of a collective but also opened up a space for the uncoun­ted to be counted as those who speak. In *Excitable Speech* Judith Butler writes that to be “addressed injuriously is not only to be open to an unknown future, but not to know the time and the place of injury, and to suffer disorientation of one’s situation as the effect of such speech” (1997: 4). Such shattering exposes the volatility of one’s place within the community of speakers, she argues, “one can be ‘put in one’s place’ by such speech, but such a place may be no place” (4). In this respect, the articulation of the new name can be considered a re-orientation of the illegal immigrants as a response to a pejorative name given by those who can speak. The act of self-naming denounces the non-place where one is put by appropriating a negative identity. The term *sans-papiers* evidently points to a lack; it is an identity *sans* — without, which leads Jacques Derrida to question the appropriation of “the terrifying phrase” *sans-papiers* as it adds new, perverse implication to their plight. He ponders, “Those we call, in a word, ‘undocumented’ supposedly lack something. He is un—. She is un—. What is missing exactly?” (quoted in Rosello, 2001, p 180-1, n 5). This lack that makes Derrida worry, actually hints at an overlap with Rancière’s understanding of “the poor” or “the people,” those who are not counted or have no part. What the *sans-papiers* lack is not only the precious documents but also their count or their part in the whole.

Rancière calls this process, by which the clandestine immigrant becomes the *sans-papiers*, “political subjectification.” It refers to an enunciative and demonstrative capacity to reconfigure the relation between the visible and the sayable, the relation between words and bodies that is distributed by the police order. It is, thus, not the recognition or embrace of an already-given identity, but the disruption of it (1999: 36). It is the production of a space between the identity of the police order and a new political subjectivity that does not exist prior to the disagreement. He writes:

A mode of subjectification does not create subjects *ex nihilo*; it creates them by transforming identities defined in the natural order of the allocation of functions and places into instances of experience of a dispute. “Workers” or “women” are identities that apparently hold no mystery. Anyone can tell *who* is meant. But political subjectification forces them out of such obviousness by questioning the relationship between a *who* and a *what* in the apparent redundancy of the positing of an existence (1999: 36).

L'affaire des sans-papiers de Saint-Bernard, as a collective action of enunciation and demonstration by “supplementary” subjects, was not aimed at creating a separate space to speak from a minority position. Instead, it manifested a dissensus by means of collapsing two different worlds (of those who are excluded and included, visible and invisible, and possessing and speaking a language) into a polemical scene. Politics, Rancière writes, consists in transforming the “space of ‘moving along’ into a space for the appearance of a subject.” It is an act that reconfigures the space “of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein” (2001, paragraph 22). The *sans-papiers* populated the French national public space, occupied its streets, churches and theaters, its everyday and media so as to become visible and audible as non-counted, as those who possess *logos*. This is a performative process of identification of the non-part with the whole that in turn transforms the partition of the whole. In his analysis of the

sans-papiers movement, Laurent Dubois argues that the movement gained success because they phrased their demands “through universalist discourse with expressions of cultural identity, bringing together approaches often considered incommensurable in French political culture” (2000: 15). They formulated their demands in a language of Republican rights and “spoke of universalism in foreign languages, presenting themselves as ‘foreign’ cultures at home in France, and so articulated the issue not as one about the ‘assimilation’ of outsiders but rather as the problem of a Republic which was violating the rights of men and women who lived within it, who had constructed it and were a part of its past, present and future” (2000: 29).

The symbolic and political space opened up by the “French” *sans-papiers* contaminated other European national spaces and triggered the formation of different national/transnational struggles, organizations, networks and campaigns on issues of migration, freedom of movement, and the right to stay against border policing, racism, deportation and detention camps.⁸ The term *sans-papier* was mostly embraced in different contexts as it is considered a status that everybody with a foreign passport can achieve under “wrong conditions.” One year after the events in Paris, the campaign-network *kein mensch ist illegal* (no one is illegal) was formed during the *Documenta X* in Kassel by a group of activists

⁸ The newsletter “Crossing Borders: Movement and Struggles of Migration” initiated by the Frassanito Network refers to different conditions experienced in various European countries, as well as between the various subjects. It can be difficult to recognize the similarities between, for example, “a temporary seasonal worker in the fields of Andalusia and a ‘legal’ migrant, who lives and works everyday in Eurospace. Or between an undocumented migrant, working in precarious jobs in Italy, and a ‘tolerated refugee’ living in an isolated ‘junglecamp’ in Northern Germany. And what about the realities of migrants in a detention centre in Poland or in Ukraine, or in front of the borders of Ceuta and Melilla?” Instead of national separation, they suggest a transnational and translational perspective from around and beyond Europe. (see, http://www.noborder.org/crossing_borders/newsletter01en.pdf)

including photographers, filmmakers, artists, and media activists. The goal of the network is to hide and support illegal migrants, squatting churches, organizing public or semi-public debates about illegal border-crossing and starting actions against deportations. It promotes the idea of opening up all borders for all and initiates campaigns such as “everyone is an expert” and “deportation class” and organizes multiple border camps every year at the borders of the “Fortress Europe.”⁹ The cultural/political activist migrant network *Kanak Attak* was founded a year later with multiple branches in Germany working on issues of racism and legalization not only by organizing actions but also video festivals and sound performances.¹⁰ In January 2001, a group of “Belgian” *sans-papiers* occupied the abandoned Somalian embassy building in Brussels, known as the *Ambassade Universelle* (Universal Embassy).¹¹ In line with the occupation of public buildings in Paris, occupying the Universal Embassy is a very symbolic act. A building in the embassy quarter that used to belong to a state now hosts people without a state. In the Embassy, in the words of Hito Steyerl, two types of spaces met: “the abandoned wreckage of the ‘failed state’ of Somalia in the shell

⁹ For the campaigns websites see respectively; <http://www.expertbase.net/everyoneisanexpert/index.php> and www.deportation-class.com

¹⁰ See, <http://www.kanak-attak.de/>. In their manifesto they define themselves as “a platform for Kanaken from different social areas and are sick of the easy switching between cultures recommended by postmodernists. Kanak Attak wants to break the assignment of ethnic identities and roles; the ‘we’ and ‘them.’ And because Kanak Attak is a question of attitude and not of heritage, origin, roots or papers, non-migrants and Germans of the 2nd and even 3rd-generation are part of it too.... Nevertheless: we compete for a new attitude of migrants of all generations that we want to bring on stage, independently and without compromise. Whoever believes that we celebrate a Potpourri out of Ghetto-HipHop and other clichés will be surprised. We sample, change and adapt different political and cultural drifts that all operate from oppositional positions. We go back to a mixture of theory, politics and cultural practice.”

¹¹ See, www.universal-embassy.be

of its bourgeois, West European villa” and a “political fiction that attempts to take this space of the collapse of state order and make it inhabitable for migrants who are interpellated as political, ethnic and universal subjects” (2004 a). The embassy not only gave visibility to the *sans-papiers*, but also a special “passport”—a photo ID that provided them with some tangible recognition of a unrecognized universal citizenship.

These are a few examples of how illegal immigrants resist and struggle within the urban everyday of Europe.¹² There are also those who disagree with the deportation or detention centers — administrative spaces in which men and women who have not committed any crime are denied their right to mobility — that are placed all over Europe and also its neighboring states. Those in-between spaces of inclusion and exclusion that Giorgio Agamben describes as the “materialization of the state of exception and ... subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction” (1998, 174) have become sites of conflict especially in Spain and Italy as well as in Germany. These struggles emphasize the existence of a “wrong” and bring forth a disagreement on who is included and who has the right to be seen and heard within the contested borders of Europe. These transnational and transitional processes of political subjectification not only create new litigious spaces and subjectivities but also new objects and concepts of discussion such as the autonomy of migration, precarity, or *lager*. They also draw new cartographies that visualize processes and places that cannot be incorporated by “regular maps” such as the map of detention and deportation centers; the map of movements and constraints within the geopolitical

¹² Some other influential organizations or networks within Europe are, Tavolo migranti dei social forum italiani (Italy) Act up (France), Barbed Wire Britain Network to End Refugee and Migrant Detention (GB), Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants (Germany), The Voice Refugee Forum (Germany), Migreurop (France).

space of the Strait of Gibraltar; the map of supranational governance operating the European migration regime function; as well as maps and videos for illegal border crossings.¹³ These movements and maps open up alternative semantic fields to those subsumed within the police order and offer different signifying practices.

The oppositional practice initiated by the *sans papiers* movement in Paris constituted a sort of collective “insurrectionary speech” that calls for emancipation and equality precisely by those who have been “radically disenfranchised from making such a call” and thereby “reterrotorial[izing] the term from its operation within dominant discourse precisely in order to counter the effects of [one’s] marginalization” (Butler, 158). This speech questions what Butler calls “foreclosure,” which is tacitly referenced in those instances in which we ask: “what must remain unspeakable for contemporary regimes of discourse to continue to exercise their power? How is the ‘subject’ before the law produced through the exclusion of other possible sites of enunciation within the law?” (1997: 139). The foreclosure as that which cannot be said and remains unspoken — reminiscent of Rancière’s police order — can be broken into the unspeakable by “a subject who speaks at the border of the speakable” taking “the risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable” (139). This political act of appropriating the “unspeakable” or “speaking impossibly” can lead to the political inclusion of dispossessed or marginalized people.

Indeed, the “embodied speech” of the illegal immigrants is an impossible one. Writing on “political becoming” of what he calls “abject subjects,” emerging in sites

¹³ For the maps, see respectively:
http://www.nolager.org/files/0407camps_in_europe.pdf;
mcs.hackitectura.net/tiki-download_wiki_attachment.php?attId=32;
<http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap>

as diverse as the sanctuaries of the *sans papiers* in France or the detention camps of the rioting refugees in Australia, political scientist Peter Nyers points out that the risks taken by the talking abject foreigner — i.e. taking the risk to become a speaking agent — is an “impossible activism.” It is impossible “because the non-status do not possess the ‘authentic’ identity (i.e. citizenship) that would allow them to be political, to be an activist” (2003: 1080). The ambivalence, to use one of the favorite terms of Bhabha, created by the improper political subject coincides with Butler’s fleeting mentioning of Rosa Parks who, as Butler writes, had no prior right to sit in front of the bus yet, by “laying claim to the right for which she had no *prior* authorization, she endowed a certain authority on the act, and began the insurrectionary process of overthrowing those established codes of legitimacy” (1997: 147).

Similarly, the *sans-papiers* as “illegitimate” interlocutors initiated another insurrectionary process that Rancière calls politics. This process of becoming political subjectivities is quite different from the mimicry of the seventh man, his repetitive imitative gestures and irritating silences of failing speech. But, it is also different from the process of dissemination of meaning, time, peoples, cultural boundaries and historical traditions — as it seems to be suggested by Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses* — through which the radical alterity of the national culture would create new forms of living and writing. According to Bhabha, these new forms of living and writing open up and simultaneously take place within the contentious internal liminality of the nation space that “provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal, and the emergent” (Bhabha, 1990: 300). This liminal space between boundaries is where social differences are articulated through a process of negotiation. This is the space where those marginalized by the exclusionary forces of nation time/space resist and become political agents.

In contradiction to Bhabha's liminal site of resistance, the disagreement uttered by the illegal immigrants acts "in the places and with the words that are common to both, even if it means reshaping those places and changing the status of those words" (Rancière, 1999: 33). They make the homogeneous and harmonious everyday urban space litigious and heterogeneous by surfacing a negation against the police order that "configures well-identifiable groups with specific interests, aspirations, values, and 'culture'" (Rancière, 2000: 125). In their attempts to make themselves visible and audible, they make the space of the "other" a common polemical space. They imitate the language to raise political dissensus by invoking equality as a universal right with expressions of cultural identity. While the liminal space operates through multiple negotiations, the space of the politics proceeds by means of negations. Bhabha conceives the liminal as a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal, and the emergent that opens up the possibility of "other narratives of the people and their difference" (1994: 300). The space of the political, conversely, narrates the enunciative and demonstrative struggles of the uncounted for equality and emancipation in their difference, as underscored by Rosa Parks' act of civil disobedience.

In his essay "In Good Faith," Salman Rushdie writes, "*Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves" (1991: 394). Is there another way of bringing newness to the world other than change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining?

Aesthetics of migration

John Berger wrote that "A Seventh Man" intends to deliberately wake up the dreamer from his dream in which the seventh man finds himself without being able to will, act, react

or speak as he is not the dreamer himself. If one can still “call the lived experience of others a dream/nightmare,” the struggles of the illegal immigrants might be seen as a wake-up call. A call for a time to “redistribute the sensible.”

As I argued, immigrant movements across and beyond European urban space and within and outside of the deportation or detention centers, create new subjects, spaces, and objects of litigation available to experience intervening the police order, as we know it. This political act of interrupting the given distribution of the sensible is, for Rancière, inherently aesthetic in so far as the political disruption is a reconfiguration of the order of what is visible or perceptible. That is to say, politics is the disruption of an order that claims to be total, not only by subordinating each of its parts to a particular place within it, but, in so doing, by establishing the conditions of visibility for a part to be a part. Consequently, its inclusion does not just demand that it is recognized as akin to other parts, but demands a transformation of the fundamental terms by which parts are seen or become visible — that is, a transformation of experience. In *The Politics of Aesthetics* Rancière writes:

If the reader is fond of analogy, aesthetics can be understood in a Kantian sense as the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience. It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time. (2004a: 13)

Therefore, aesthetics is not a matter of art and taste; it is, first of all, a matter of time and space. Aesthetic acts are “configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity” (2004a: 9). In this respect, it understands actions, silences,

thoughts, dreams, perceptions or enunciations not in terms of a social content that could be judged as relatively good or bad, but rather as the production of formal arrangements and forms of sense distribution that are, at heart, simultaneously aesthetic and political. Therefore, the political is always aesthetic because “politics is only efficacious as a formal arrangement of social agents, institutions, and possibilities; aesthetic forms are always political because they are never anything less than the arrangement and distribution of forms of perception that are ultimately social and political” (Highmore, 2005: 455).

Herein lies the link between migratory movements and aesthetics. Yet, this knot should not be understood as an uncomplicated manifestation of the global multitude transforming every territory they go as curator Hou Hanru writes in the statement of the exhibition entitled *Wherever We Go: Art, Identity, Cultures in Transit*:

In fact, the migrants turn their “exile” into a process of engaging and negotiating with the urban/suburban spaces. Culturally and physically, their presence and active involvements strongly change the social and cultural structures of the city, to produce new cities out of the old cities (often European traditional styles). The booming of China Towns, Arabic quarters, etc. are the most visible signs while, internally, the structure of the population, public behaviours, values, etc. are being diversified and transformed towards a much more variable and wealthy climate.¹⁴

Hanru’s curatorial statement seems to operate within the discourse of the multicultural art world promoting what Hito Steyerl calls the “jargon of inauthenticity,” that is as sentimental and essentialist as Adorno’s notion of “jargon of authenticity,” except for the fact, that “what is being

¹⁴ The exhibition *Wherever We Go: Art, Identity, Cultures in Transit*, organized by Hou Hanru and Gabi Scardi, took place at the Spazio Oberdan in Milan between October 2006 and January 2007. <http://www.sfai-art.com/News/NewsDetail.aspx?newsID=1178&navID=§ionID=8>

essentialized resently is not localist rootedness, but the requirements of the global market: adaptability, innovation and mobility" (2004b: 165-6). According to Steyerl, this jargon fits in the national rhetorics of multiculturalism centered on "integration" and "enrichment" epitomized in Hanru's argument that the booming of ethnic quarters would accumulate in the diversification and transformation of the structure of the population, public behaviours, and values "towards a much more variable and wealthy climate."

The suggestion of a "wealthy climate" to come can be regarded as functioning within what Rancière calls the "logic of consensus" through which "the givens of any collective situation are objectivized in such a way as they can no more lend themselves to a dispute, to the polemical framing of a controversial world into the given world" (2006). It is the dismissal of the "aesthetics of politics" by "plugging the intervals and patching over the possible gaps between appearance and reality" (2004c: 305). Politics, as Rancière understands it, does not emerge through mere movement or mere appearance in a space. It occurs when unrepresented subjects create a *polemical* space where they put into contention the objective status of what is "given" and impose an examination and discussion of those things that were not "visible," that were not accounted for previously. It is an utterance of disagreement, a struggle "for one's voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner" (Žižek, 1998: 63). It is the reconfiguration of one's body, of one's lived world, of one's space and time. And this process might be another way in which newness enters the world. Perhaps not only by means of "sly civility" but also by acts of disagreement, as the legacy of the *sans-papiers* reminds us.

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