

BRIDGES & CROSSINGS



This Bridge Called My Back

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III

Crossers

y otros atravesados

*Al otro lado está el río
y no lo puedo cruzar,
al otro lado está el mar
no lo puedo atravesar.*

—Isabel Parra, "En La Frontera"

On the other side is the river
and I cannot cross it
on the other side is the sea
I cannot bridge it.

—Isabel Parra, "At The Border"

"That is part of the
beauty of all
literature. You
discover that your
longings are
universal longings,
that you're not
lonely and isolated
from anyone. You
belong." - F. Scott
Fitzgerald

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I
look'd.

"Birds, bees, butterflies... nests, holes, trees, lakes, hives, hills, shores, and hollows... nearly every creature shares some version of this deep attachment to a place in which life has been known to flourish, the kind of place we call home. It is in the nature of human attachment that every journey and expulsion sets into motion the search for home. That nostos, finding home, is among our most profound needs is evident by the price we are willing to pay for it."

— Shoshana Zuboff, The Age of Surveillance Capitalism

An image is a bridge between evoked emotion and conscious knowledge; words are the cables that hold up the bridge. Images are more direct, more immediate than words, and closer to the unconscious. Picture language precedes thinking in words; the metaphorical mind precedes analytical consciousness.



CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY
BY WALT WHITMAN

WHAT IF... A Haiku-ish Uchronian Tree

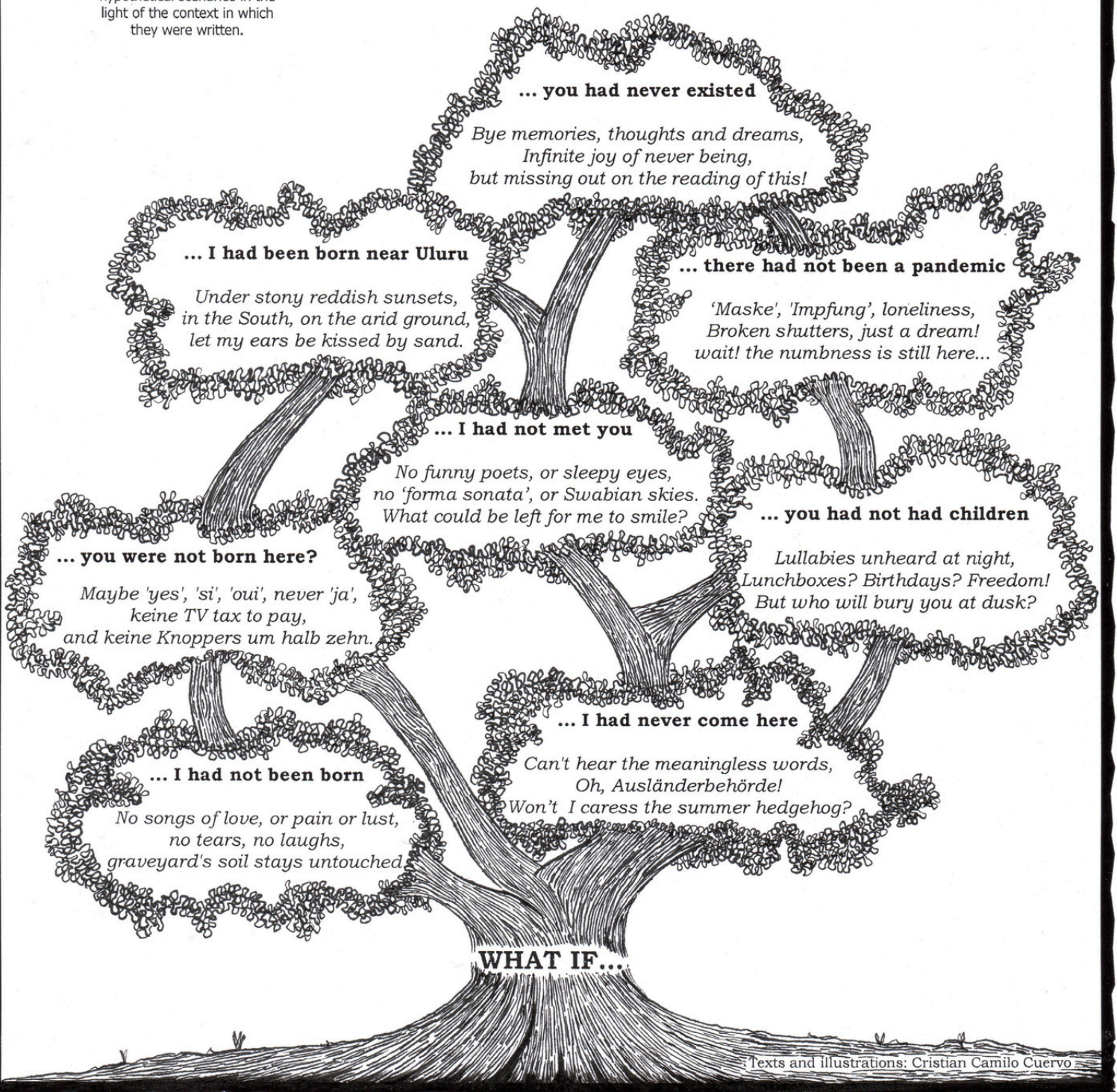
The word **Uchronia**, coined and first used in 1876, derives from the Greek roots *ou-* and *chronos*, 'time' and literally means 'at no time' or 'a time that does not exist'. It is used together with the terms 'alternate -or alternative- history', 'allohistory' or 'AH' to refer to the same literary genre.

Uchronias develop a new version of the past from a **Jonbar point** or point of divergence in the timeline of our canonized history. Their main objective is to answer the question "**what would have happened if...**" and explore the implications of these hypothetical scenarios in the light of the context in which they were written.

Haiku is a traditional form of Japanese short poetry composed of 17 phonetic units distributed in a metric pattern of 5, 7, 5. It is mostly, although not exclusively, focused on nature, which is signalled by a seasonal marker or **Kigo**. Haikus generally do not rhyme.

Haiku in other languages, mainly in English, as well as some modern variants of **haiku** in Japanese, do not necessarily follow the conventions of traditional haiku (5, 7, 5 pattern, theme (nature) or style in general). Many of those poems are classified instead as **Senryū**, particularly when their subject is the human condition and have a less solemn and more ironic tone than **haiku**.

The **Haiku-ish Uchronian Tree** does not strictly adhere to the conventional form of the Japanese **Haiku** and is rather an experimental proposal based on a more flexible interpretation of the genre.



... you had never existed

*Bye memories, thoughts and dreams,
Infinite joy of never being,
but missing out on the reading of this!*

... I had been born near Uluru

*Under stony reddish sunsets,
in the South, on the arid ground,
let my ears be kissed by sand.*

... there had not been a pandemic

*'Maske', 'Impfung', loneliness,
Broken shutters, just a dream!
wait! the numbness is still here...*

... I had not met you

*No funny poets, or sleepy eyes,
no 'forma sonata', or Swabian skies.
What could be left for me to smile?*

... you had not had children

*Lullabies unheard at night,
Lunchboxes? Birthdays? Freedom!
But who will bury you at dusk?*

... you were not born here?

*Maybe 'yes', 'si', 'oui', never 'ja',
keine TV tax to pay,
and keine Knoppers um halb zehn.*

... I had never come here

*Can't hear the meaningless words,
Oh, Ausländerbehörde!
Won't I caress the summer hedgehog?*

... I had not been born

*No songs of love, or pain or lust,
no tears, no laughs,
graveyard's soil stays untouched.*

WHAT IF...



AS A DEAR FRIEND SAYS

EVERYTHING IS ~~ORDINARY~~ ORDINARY

BEHIND THESE STURDY WALLS,

ERECTED AROUND ~~THE~~ MYRIADS OF SYMBOLS,

ENTANGLED WITH PAINS,
JOYS, AND ~~SO~~ SUFFERINGS.

TO CROSS FROM ONE ORDINARY TO ANOTHER

IS AN ARDUOUS PASSAGE.

EVERYTHING GOOD
TAKES PLACE IN THE PERIPHERIES

ONE DAY I KNOW FOR SURE,
YOU WILL PAINT THESE FEELINGS,

CAPTURE THEM IN COLOURS,

LET THEM PLAY.





Composing Images of Migration:
Exploring avenues in (very) 'late'
photography for the study of post-
resettlement homemaking in the
landscape

In the early spring of 1709, thousands of 'Poor Palatines' left the Southwest of Germany to start a long and perilous journey down the Rhine in the hopes of escaping from the grips of oppressive feudalism and decades of cross-border warfare. Motivated by rumors of Queen Anne of England granting large and fertile stretches of land to willing colonists across the Atlantic, the Palatines travelled to London. After months of waiting in makeshift camps, the migrants were finally granted their wish and were sent off to populate her Majesty's colonies, some to County Limerick in Ireland and others to the Province of New York in North America. More than three hundred years later, vibrant communities of Irish and American Palatines continue to thrive in the same landscapes that their ancestors were once foreign to.

- Julia van Duijvenvoorde





700 → Classical Antiquity

600

500 → Classical Greece

400

300 ← Classical Greece

200

100

0

100

200

300

400 ← Classical Antiquity

→ Middle Ages

500

600

700 → Islamic Classical Era

800

900

1000 - Alhazen's (Ibn al-Haytham) Book of Optics

(Kitāb al-Manāẓir), 1011 to 1021

1100

1200 ← Islamic Classical Era

- Witelo's *Perspectiva* (Latin version of

Alhazen's Optics), 1274

; important for European aesthetics in

the thirteenth century and the

Renaissance¹

; Panofsky, *Perspective* 94 n. 16,

points out that the Renaissance knew

Euclid, in somewhat modified form,

through the Arabs. ; Gombrich takes

account of Alhazen in *Art and*

Illusion 15: he "taught the medieval

West the distinction between sense,

knowledge, and inference, all of

which come into play in perception".²

¹ Puente-Vilchez, J. M. (2017). *Aesthetics in Arabic thought: From pre-Islamic Arabia through*

al-Andalus. In *Handbook of Oriental Studies: Section 1 The Near and Middle East* (p. 5). Leiden and

Boston: Brill.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5, footnote.

1300 ← Middle Ages

→ Renaissance

1400

1500

1600 → Classicism

1700 → Orientalism

→ Neoclassicism

- discipline of Aesthetics

; Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten

(1714-1762), included the term

Ästhetik (the science of feeling),

as one part of Philosophy, analyzing

it in Cartesian terms and beginning

with the idea of art as the imitation

of nature. ; it was Immanuel Kant

(1724 - 1804) who first made

aesthetic theory into an organic part

of a philosophical system.³

→ The history of the discipline

begins in classical Greece, continues

in Rome and into the Middle Ages, and

culminates in the Renaissance and in

the creation of Aesthetics under that

name in the eighteenth century.⁴ →

; (...) there are both aesthetic

and philosophical reasons why the

Aesthetics born in the West did not

traditionally include an "aesthetics

in the Arabic language".⁵

; Islamic art was often seen as a

second-rate, mere artisanship meant

to serve dominant religious

principles or to produce decorative

or exotic objects.⁶

; This attitude toward Arab-Islamic

art and aesthetics crystallized into

a particularly clear and influential

theory in the Hegelian vision of

art.⁷ →

- Industrial Revolution

- discipline of European Art History

creation of Islamic art as a modern

concept

1850 - second Industrial Revolution

(Technological Revolution)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4, footnote.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

- movement of Abstract Art, late 19th

century

; Wassily Wassilyevich Kandinsky

(1866-1944), Paul Klee (1879-1940,

Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan

(1872-1944 → ; approach Arab-Islamic

artistic sensibility very

differently, exploring the

possibilities of a practical,

nonfigurative aesthetics that

incorporated concepts from Islamic,

African, and Pre-Colombian art into

Western pictorial abstraction⁸ →

1950 - movement of Cognitive Revolution

- Third Industrial Revolution (Digital

Revolution)

2000

The modern theorization of Aesthetics as a method and

form of knowledge emerged in eighteenth-century

Europe during an era of Classicism. The history of

the discipline is usually traced back to classical

Greece, then to Rome and finally to the Middle Ages,

which corresponds to the Classical era in the Islamic

world. An aesthetics in the Arabic language written

by both Arabs and non-Arabs during the same period is

traditionally excluded from this history. And now

scholars seek to connect many kinds of discourses

beyond the traditional forms of knowledge found in

classical Islam to Aesthetics. However, both the

paucity of systematic research on the topic and the

cultural history of the senses in the Islamic world

which does not suit the filter of art or architecture

history make the subject difficult to study. On the

other hand, after the Cognitive Revolution which

began in the 1950s, the approaches to the discipline

of Aesthetics have also shifted. Cognitive methods

enable us to approach art, architecture and space in

general not only from their production but also their

reception by way of digitalization. My PhD research

explores this approach as a new way to theorise

Islamic Aesthetics. My Ph.D. research explores this

approach as a way to bridge the fields of cognitive

science and Islamic aesthetics, moving beyond

traditional disciplinary borders to create a new

space of understanding and interdisciplinarity.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

* This research is being carried out as part of an ongoing doctoral research project entitled *Language of Reception: Formulating a design grammar for contemporary architectural ornament* at the University of Heidelberg under the co-supervision of Prof. Dr. Rebecca Sauer (Islamic Studies & Material Culture Studies, University of Zurich), Dr. Rebecca Chamberlain (Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths) and Prof. Dr. Brigitte Sösch (Architectural and Modern Art History, University of Heidelberg).

A feminist koeksister figuration

the feminist koeksister figuration is open to more ways of definition and a multiplicity of manifestos. This is an attempt to construct a companion, an interlocutor, as an ever-changing reference point - a carrier of multiple pasts, present-day realities, and futures.

A companion to understand that collective liberation is intersectional and requires our 'work' and differences.

What if the koeksister comes to stand as a figure where we learn that we are ultimately entangled with one another and world? That we are cut-together-apart and that "entanglements are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entanglings entail differentiations, differentiations entail entanglings." (Barad, 2012)

What if it stands as a figure to think about transversal politics, **bondgenootskap**: "dialogical politics in which all the participants in the dialogue see themselves **not as representatives** but as advocates of particular collectivities and social categories."? (Yuval-Davis, 2007)

a koeksister is a braided or twisted, crispy, doughy, sticky and syrupy, sweet delicacy that most South Africans are familiar with. It has a loaded history that goes back to Dutch settler colonialism and intimate connections to the South African white nation building project. Viewing the koeksister as a **figuration for liberation** unsettles its symbolism and signification. It sees the world - human and non-human - as a 'koekeerasie' - as entangled.

To make and bake koeksisters requires patience, dedication, and time. The syrup is made the day before, the oil needs to heat, the dough need to be made and be rested, rolled out, cut and braided, then fried in oil and dunked in cold syrup.


What if a braiding koeksister were like 'braiding' bridges? Where the koeksister[s] can be seen as "**passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote**" (Anzaldúa, 2009). Where it can help with transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives.

STANDING ON TRAGIC BORDERS

The notion of unfreedom, of a constant feeling of both being a border and over-stepping a border, a conflict within self and towards self, a feeling of familiarity and strangeness, of fragmentation, of (un)belonging, introduces the German theatre scholar, Hans-Thies Lehmann's writing on the concept of tragedy. Lehmann (2016) argues that '...tragedy has its object in terror, alienation, fear, ambiguity, the experience of impotent defeat, vulnerability, uncertainty, and downfall by chance, which defies understanding' (p 29). Tragedy, in other words, does not make one feel at home, or safe in the world. It causes a sense of (un)belonging, of estrangement, of insecurity.

(Contribution by Kanya Viljoen)





Who are the Brazilians? What unites such diverse cultures and people under a single national identity? The 'Brazilian Portraits,' a photographic collective active between 2013 and 2018, created a rich archive of over 4,000 faces and stories of Brazilians driven by this question.

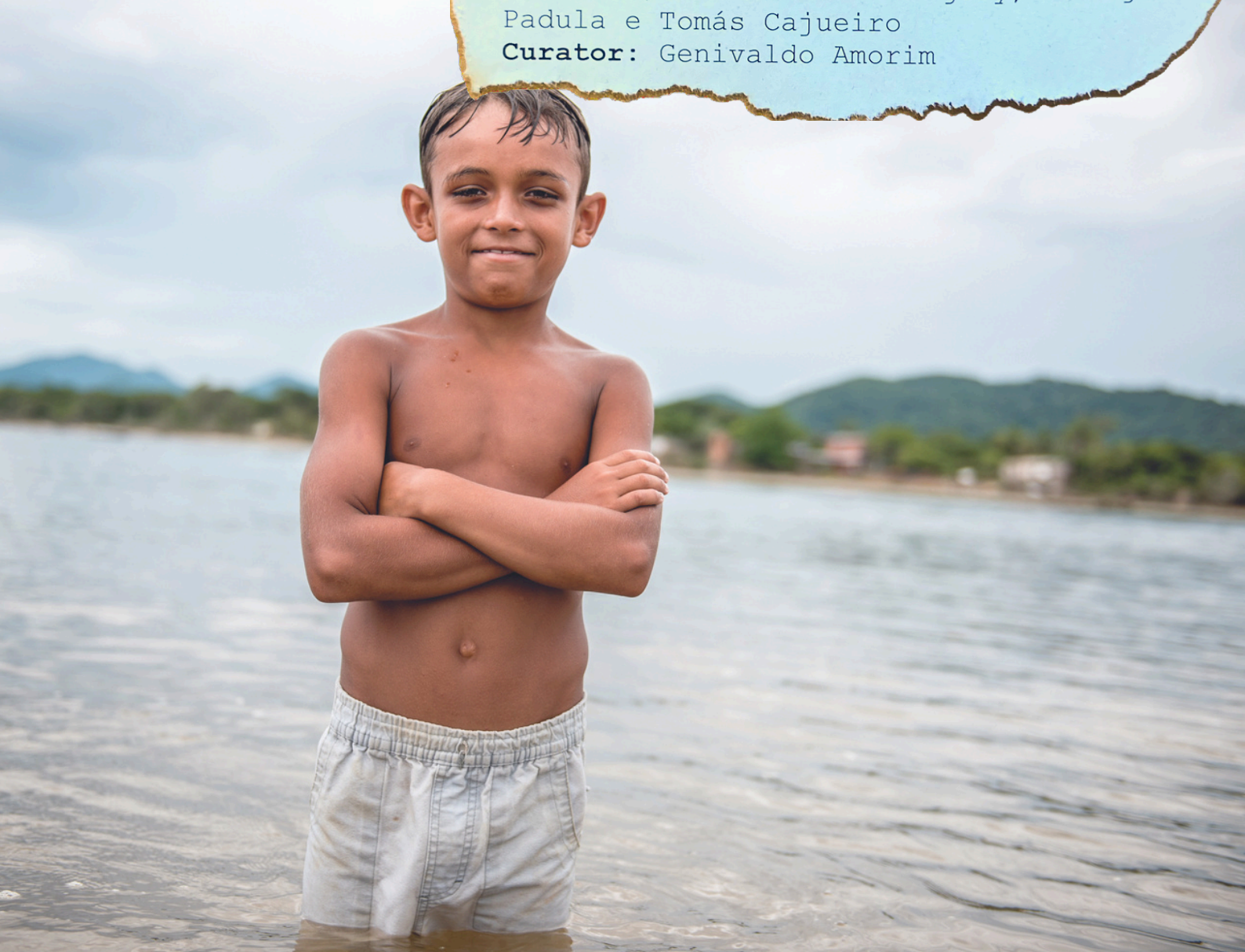
What do the Caiçara of Iguape, the Canavieiro of Ribeirão Preto, and the Landless of Bauru have in common? When asked if they are Brazilians, everyone, without exception, answered yes. But when we inquire about others, when considering them as fellow Brazilians and what we share in common, the responses become more convoluted. It appears that we struggle to recognize in others, particularly those who are different from us, elements of ourselves. Our journey is centered on the process of shaping the identity and self-awareness of the Brazilian people by Brazilians themselves. It aims to transcend the limitations imposed by colonialism on our understanding of Brazil and its people, delving beyond the superficial layers of the European narrative that still dominates the Brazilian popular imagination today.

We believe that it becomes even more relevant in the current political-social context of the country, in which the crisis we face seems to have its roots in problems of representativeness, as much as, if not more than, economic or political ones. The political class fails to give voice to the aspirations of the population, and from this seems to result in a fundamental fracture between democratic civil societies and that class that, in theory, should represent them. The resolution of a crisis of representativeness necessarily depends on the answer we give to the question above, however complex it may be.





Producer: Tomás Cajueiro
Photographers: Daniel Arroyo, Jardiel
Carvalho, Marcela Gregory, Rogerio
Padula e Tomás Cajueiro
Curator: Genivaldo Amorim



Bridges, crossings. This is what this Forum is all about. In my PhD research, I often have to deal with boundaries, both real and imagined, and with bridges that my informants try to either build or destroy. Since you might not know me, I'd better explain what I'm talking about. I am currently studying gender roles and gender identities in contemporary Japan, specifically through the drag art of a club in Kyoto, Japan . I conduct fieldwork there, interviewing the performers and attending their shows, following them as much as I can so as not to miss even a sprinkle of their magic. Drag is in and of itself a crossing of borders. In its most 'popular' understanding, it involves crossing from one gender to another, morphing one's own body to achieve one resembling that of the opposite gender. Here, the crossing is both physical and 'immaterial': it involves bodies crossing from one state to another, and identities continuously forming and dissolving. As with any other phenomenon, however, the reality is a bit more complex. The cast I work with presents drag queens of all genders and sexualities, and not all of them strive to achieve an illusion of femininity or masculinity. What are they crossing, then? What bridges do they build or break down?

The club and my analysis might not give us a definitive, general answer, but at least an interesting perspective. Located at the border between the subway and the street, the club holds the longest-running drag show organized by Japanese people every last Friday of the month. Here, the queens mainly lipsync to non-Japanese songs, setting up shows and entertaining an audience deeply diverse in terms of gender, sexuality, nationality, and age. Since its inception, the show itself has crossed several international borders as well. Even though there were people performing 'in drag' before the late 1980s, the concepts of 'drag' and 'drag queen' were imported to Japan around 1989, when one of the founders of the show came back from New York. There, he had experienced the vibrant gay and drag scene of the city and had performed in drag himself. Thus, he decided to start the show in Osaka together with a DJ and another crossdressing performer. Since then, the show has continued to amaze generations of patrons and casual visitors, opening up a space where differences both disappear and are celebrated.

“JOIN THE DECONSTRUCTION!!!”: BRIDGES AND CROSSINGS AT A DRAG SHOW IN KYOTO

Contribution by Marco Del Din
Photos by Ruven Afanador



What is interesting in the queens' dazzling performances is that they do not strive to achieve any specific type of femininity. As they put on their five pairs of lashes, their three wigs, and their considerable amount of makeup, the queens transcend gender. They become something completely different, both goddesses and evil witches, both humans and animals. As they mentioned during many of our conversations, a drag queen is not a woman, neither strives to become one. In her transformation, she fluctuates between genders, she is at times male, female, and everything in between. In the end, she becomes a new entity, 'simply' a drag queen, something that cannot be clearly defined (as a matter of fact, none of the queens I interviewed was able to give me a stable definition) and that is constantly transforming. Attending one of their drag shows means crossing a bridge into a world where boundaries become blurred, where new identities become possible, and new understandings of oneself and the other can be discovered.

A similar 'blurring' effect can be seen in the audience. Many of the people I talked to, both during and after the shows, mentioned that they felt a strong sense of belonging, a feeling of community despite barely knowing each other. In the context of the club, with the help of the queens and their performances, differences of age, sex, and nationality eventually dissolve, and new bridges are erected between people. In this new-found community, which might disappear after just one night (not that it matters, one night of community is worth more than twenty years of loneliness), people can enjoy the shows together and imagine new futures and possibilities for themselves. The lipsynchs of the queens, tapping into various cultural milieux and different both queer and non-queer communities, directly speak to the audience, and create shared pasts and presents for the people watching, which are now almost as one.

To sum up, this show in Kyoto fully shows how important drag can be in terms of crossing boundaries, destroying them and making them porous, and of bridges between people and cultures. I could write many more pages about this, and I will eventually have to, even though in a way more formal manner, with many parentheses, names, and page numbers. For now, I will conclude with the wish that, even once in your life, you reader will be able to experience something like this, either in Kyoto or at your nearest drag venue. Heidelberg has a lot to offer, and so does almost every city. Go support your nearest drag show, cross the border of the club, and, to quote the motto of the Kyoto show, "Join the deconstruction!!"

This is an excerpt from an Afrikaans play *Op Soek na Salem*/ Searching for Salem wherein I explored my German genealogy, tracing the colonial lineage of my maternal grandmother's forefather Johannes Böhm. My research uncovered my family's colonial archive that documented Böhm's, a Renish missionary, journey from Germany to Namibia in the year 1863. The study was framed by postcolonial discourse that warrants *verwerking*/ alteration/ processing/ adaptation/ working and reworking of colonial archives. The study was a practice-led research that uncovered how I could *verwerk*/ rework my colonial archive through performance to incite transgression of preservation. The study sought to move beyond the ossification of colonial heirlooms to reconcile with emerging postcolonial futures. In my performances, I transformed my colonial archive into tactile textile-linen. The word 'lineage' originates from the noun 'line' that in turn, etymologically stems from the word *lino* referring to linen (Miller 2005: 239). A single thread can therefore signify themes of genealogy, heritage, identity and ancestry. I used linen in its entirety as text embedded tapestries to symbolise my colonial narratives - spun together to form what constitutes my tension filled present, a present that is weaved from villainous histories (colonialism, Afrikaans nationalism, the German Namibian genocide as well as German nationalism). In my performance research I demonstrated a 'grappling with' my colonial past: I tainted, ripped, tore, folded and unfolded, draped, hung and suspended the cloth. I also blotted the white linen with blue colour using *cyano-type*, resulting in mournful, sickly blue stains that evoked Jacques Derrida's (1998) notion of poison as remedy (*pharmakon*). This study, although concerned with my genealogy was limited to my South African history, specifically my colonial past. I am curious as to what lies 'beyond' - past the colonial formation of my identity.



Searching for Salem

1. THE LINEN IS SLEEPING

The stage is dark. The pedal sounds of a single spinning wheel rhythmically keeps time. Only the spinning wheel is illuminated. Hedwig sits at the edge of the stage and repairs a tear in one of her linen cloths. Suddenly she sees a moth. She catches it.

HEDWIG:

A moth. I've made a cave for you in the hollow of my hands. I study my little insect hostage. I feel your musty-powdered, lace-spun wings kick up, fly against my finger-walls. And together in prayer and the whispering of a psalm (Hedwig folds her hands and prays) I lead you to peace in the palm of my left hand.

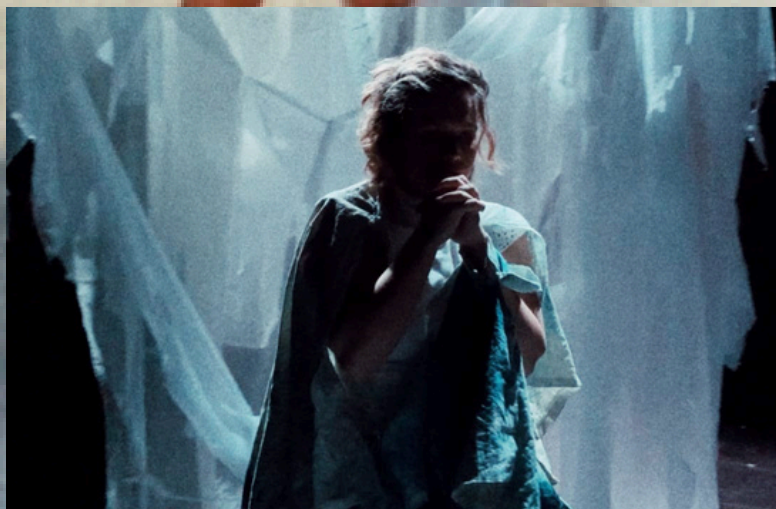
Hedwig smothers the moth in her hands. She watched as his body falls helplessly to the floor. She looks at her palms.

My palms with the travellers lines. Look. (Gestures to the palm of her hand) Look at the routes from Europe to Africa here - imprinted here in my inherited skin. (Hedwig smells something.) Do you smell it? It smells like death. Sjuut..., the rags are asleep. Do not disturb or wake them, it took a long time to appease them...Sjuut

Shush..., the cloths are sleeping. Do not disturb or awaken them, it took a long time to appease them.



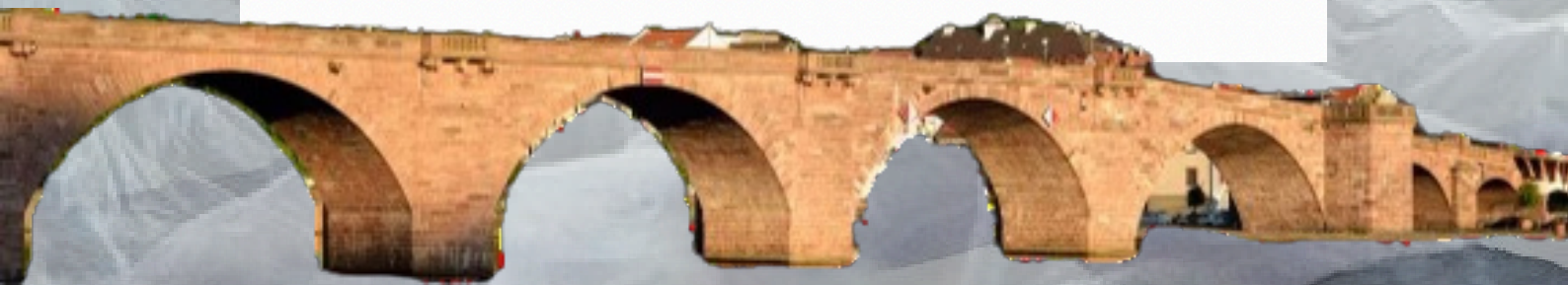
CONTRIBUTION BY NELL VAN DER MERWE



Crossing

BY JERICHO BROWN

The water is one thing, and one thing for miles.
The water is one thing, making this bridge
Built over the water another. Walk it
Early, walk it back when the day goes dim, everyone
Rising just to find a way toward rest again.
We work, start on one side of the day
Like a planet's only sun, our eyes straight
Until the flame sinks. The flame sinks. Thank God
I'm different. I've figured and counted. I'm not crossing
To cross back. I'm set
On something vast. It reaches
Long as the sea. I'm more than a conqueror, bigger
Than bravery. I don't march. I'm the one who leaps.



Write. Your voice is the most powerful

tool you have.

We refuse

to be spoken of

objects, demeaned or commemorated

we must

recognize that difference is a reason for

growth, rather

destruction.

Within us is the power to

carving a path towards visibility,

**This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical
Women of Color is a groundbreaking anthology
edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa
(1981)**



eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage from the dominant culture, write it off altogether as a lost cause, and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are numerous once we decide to act and not react.

(ANZALDÚA, GLORIA. BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA. NA, 2004.)



Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a *travesía*, a crossing. I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape "knowing," I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. "Knowing" is painful because after "it" happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before.