Refugee Routes
Connecting the Displaced and the Emplaced

Vanessa Agnew

Driven from home by war, persecution, climate change, and poverty, unprecedented numbers of people are now on the move (UNHCR, 2017). This is generating social, cultural, and political challenges and raising questions about the responses of liberal democracies. Although globally insignificant as a refugee host country, Australia is key to debates over migration because of its 'Pacific Solution', a model of border externalization, incarceration, 'offshore processing', and third country resettlement (Neumann, 2004). The model has been strongly criticized on legal and humanitarian grounds, and the returning of asylum seekers deemed a violation of internationally ratified human rights (Klepp, 2010; Neilson, 2010; European Parliament Briefing, 2016). Nonetheless, border externalization, incarceration, and offshore processing are approaches increasingly adopted by European and other countries confronted by arrivees whose existence is untenable at home (Ayre, 2016; Sigona, 2018). In future, ever more people fleeing conflict, poverty, and environmental degradation will look to high-income countries for refuge (Frelick et al., 2016). The predicted tenfold increase in climate migrants alone has powerful implications for transforming social and political processes for coming generations (Brown, 2008). Better understanding refugeeism and forced migration and developing informed and sustainable responses are thus matters of profound global urgency (Betts and Collier, 2017).

State responses are often justified by invoking historical examples of migration, even though – or perhaps because – refugeeism is neither well historicized nor globally conceptualized. European historiography, for example, has only recently begun to acknowledge Europe's migration past and scholars still tend to emphasize regional rather than pan-European perspectives (Sturm-Martin, 2012; van Mol and de Valk, 2016). Refugees and asylum seekers have not just been ignored, silenced, or forgotten by mainstream historians (Marfleet, 2007), but, as Jérôme Elie (2014) argues, they have been systematically excluded from the historical record (p. 30). This contrasts with a public discourse that explicitly links the current experiences of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa to those of Europeans displaced in large numbers by the Second World War and other con-

flicts. In Germany specifically, responses to refugees during the 'long summer of migration' were interpreted as acts of historical reconciliation and as an exemplification of the country's 'welcome culture' (Mayer, 2016; Hamann and Karakayali, 2016; Yurdakul and zur Nieden, 2018). Yet growing populism and pressure within the European Union to apply the 'Pacific Solution' to the Mediterranean suggest that this historical lens is being eroded. A notion of Fortress Europe is increasingly shaping public attitudes and state policy.

The question arises, then, as to how refugees, exiles, and 'irregular migrants' might be inserted in collective historical consciousness. Central to this is the idea of place and its associated possibilities for remembering. The *lieu de mémoire* – something Pierre Nora (1989) calls a site 'where memory crystalizes and secretes itself' – enables a society in flux to remember and preserve what is important to it (p. 7). Since asylum seekers and refugees lack collective sites for remembering, they are often concealed from wider public view (Evershed et al., 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Their expulsion from home can thus be considered simultaneously an expulsion from the 'land of memory' (Creet and Kitzmann, 2014). Prevented from crossing borders, would-be asylum seekers are subject to a temporality that cleaves them from both the past and the future (Neilson, 2010). Refugees have neither time nor place. This has implications not only for the displaced but also for potential hosts. Being 'out of time' affects common understandings of history as teleological; being 'out of place' precludes the possibility of regarding history as 'double-sided', an exchange between those who are already there and those who arrive (Dening, 2002). We can conclude then that there is a pressing need for incorporating refugee and asylum-seeker memories into existing historical narratives. Not only must such a retelling include the experiences of those considered 'worthy' refugees and 'regular' permanent migrants, but it must also provide an account of those deemed 'unworthy' and 'irregular', those who are unwelcomed, detained, or turned away. Documenting past and present refugee flight, and identifying and interpreting sites of refugee remembrance, will create a richer picture of the ways in which endogenous histories are, and always have been, imbricated with those of others.

If transnational historicization is one means of addressing the growing crisis of human mobility, another involves scrutinizing the mechanisms of state control that increasingly regulate who may belong and who may not. The concentration of asylum seekers and refugees on islands and in camps and liminal housing, along with the tightening of borders, means that refugeeism is subject to selective invisibility, on the one hand, and hyper-surveillance in border zones, on the other (Tazzioli, 2016, p. 11). This invisibility/surveillance nexus emerges as one of the dominant structures of state control. In response, scholars and activists call for what Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani refer to as a 'disobedient gaze' that directs attention away from the 'illegality' of border crossings to focus instead on state violations of refugee rights (2013, p. 289). This shift will allow the border – like the refugee route

– to be thought of as a potential site of encounter (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 2016) as well as one of investigation, redistributive justice, and memorialization.

Notions of invisibility, containment, and disobedience find expression in Debarati Sanyal's contribution to *Refugee Routes*. In the Calais 'Jungle', Sanyal says, the irregular migrant is configured as 'bare life', someone whose existence in the French camp 'is rendered invisible and inaudible'. In an unfortunate coincidence of humanitarianism and securitarianism, the irregular migrant is seen as 'a body to be saved, contained, policed, moved around, encamped, kept out, or expelled; in short, as a body to be managed'. Claudia Tazreiter, likewise, focuses on the problem of invisibility, highlighting the fact that Australia's repressive refugee policies are upheld and enforced through statutes that, on the one hand, uphold humanitarian efforts to prevent deaths at sea, and, on the other, criminalize reporting about inhuman conditions in detention centres. This 'veil of secrecy', she argues, is countered by the clandestine efforts of journalists, medical practitioners, human rights advocates, artists, and detainees themselves. The Iranian writer Behrouz Boochani, whose 2018 memoir was composed in secret via text message, for example, describes mental ill health, self-harm, and suicide as common responses to the systemic human rights violations perpetrated against asylum seekers and refugees at the offshore processing centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. Voicing refugee concerns and bringing human rights violations to public attention will, Tazreiter argues, help counter state-directed efforts to 'disappear' refugees and asylum seekers.

In this vein, *Refugee Routes* argues that it is possible to counter invisibility with disobedient looking, silence with telling, extirpation with surviving, inequity with redressing, displacement with re-rooting. While the stakes are different for host communities and those displaced by need, fear, hope, or decree, commonalities may be forged through storytelling, researching, archiving, reenacting, and memorializing. Social scientists David Benček and Julia Strasheim, in their work on xenophobia in Germany, suggest that anti-refugee violence is correlated to public opinion on refugees (2016, p. 10; see also Koopmans and Olzak, 2004). To shift public opinion, then, is to take a step towards creating a society that is more accommodating to newcomers and the needy. Since participation in a society's memory culture confers the legitimacy of belonging, the possibilities for social participation and a sense of belonging are correspondingly curtailed when access to memory culture is restricted (Glynn and Kleist, 2012). From this we can conclude that developing a commemorative culture around refugeehood has implications for changing cultural attitudes and for countering what has been described as the pervasive 'moral panic' about refugees (Baumann, 2016, p. 1).

Culture is made in motion, as anthropologist James Clifford insists (1997, p. 3). This puts the refugee route and its unruly exchanges at the centre of cultural production. Rather than being seen as the agent of crisis and threat, the refugee can

come to be acknowledged in his or her creative potential (Nail, 2015, p. 12). The history of hosting, moreover, emerges as a palimpsest of displacement and route-finding. Fostering an awareness of historical continuities and developing a commemorative culture around refugees and their routes of escape and survival will help to promote more humane and sustainable responses to the plight of the forcibly displaced.

Refugee Routes follows Laurajane Smith's insight that heritage is neither a site nor an object but a 'cultural process of meaning and memory making' (2011, p. 68). The performative dimension of reenactment, focused here on migration heritage, has socially transformative potential (Agnew, 2007). In examining examples of refugee reenactments, this volume investigates the historic movement of people through space. The 2016–17 Civil March for Aleppo, for example, traced in reverse the refugee trek, starting from Berlin to proceed through the Balkan Peninsula and Greece to the Lebanon-Syria border. As Clara Zimmermann shows in her essay on the Civil March, by fostering collaborations among march participants, refugees, aid workers, and hosts, the March collected stories, songs, and images and disseminated information via social media, film, and print. Rather than being a futile undertaking of the kind identified by Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek as a 'zero-level' protest, Zimmermann sees in the long-distance walk the potential for future activism and social change. Through its loose retracing of the route used by hundreds of thousands of predominantly Syrian and Afghan refugees through Greece and the Balkans to Austria, Germany, and countries to the North, it might also be argued that the Civil March established historical parallels with earlier refugees traversing the same landscapes. Even now these landscapes bear the marks of successive waves of refugees in the twentieth century and earlier, with memories of flight and exile still shared by those displaced from the former Yugoslavia, the German Democratic Republic, and other communist countries, and by the Second World War. This illustrates the commemorative potential of refugee reenactment (Agnew, 2019).

The Walk in Solidarity with Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Detainees – also an attenuated form of refugee reenactment – invokes earlier wayfaring and, with a gesture to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, follows the ancient pilgrim path along the North Downs Way in southern England. Conceived as an annual protest against the United Kingdom's policy of indefinitely detaining migrants, the latter-day pilgrimage foregrounds the value of traversing historical walking routes and engaging in dialogue. As Harriet Hulme argues here, the resulting two collections of walkers' reflections, *Refugee Tales* and *Refugee Tales II*, tread a difficult line between voicing refugee experiences and ventriloquizing them. Bringing into dialogue Emmanuel Levinas, who cautions against substituting one's own voice for that of the other, and Hannah Arendt, who stresses the political value of invoking the other through storytelling, Hulme enquires into the value and ethical legitimacy of walking in an-

other's shoes and telling her stories. Hulme concludes, with Arendt, that the telling of individuals' tales restores human dignity to them, and so constitutes an effective protest against the detention of refugees.

Inscribing displaced people into the historical and social imagination serves as a reminder that the histories of Europe and the former Ottoman Empire, like those of the Middle East, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere, are themselves a palimpsest of displacement and unruly cultural exchange. Further, incorporating recent flight into a larger complex of memory and cultivating sensibilities about multi-layered routes of displacement offer the possibility of broadening historical studies to include landscape and place-based interpretation (Niukko, 2009; McGrath, 2015). This argument is picked up in the essay dealing with Armin Wegner's 1915–16 photographic documentation of the Armenian genocide. By juxtaposing the flight of Armenians from Anatolia to the Syrian desert with the recent flight of refugees from war-torn Syria to Turkey and western Europe, Vanessa Agnew's and Egemen Özbek's essay proposes a topographic frame for reflecting on refugee issues. The selfsame landscape, crisscrossed by waves of refugee flight over the span of a century, points to the shifting identity of hosts and strangers – an insight that is often lost in populist lamentations over the burden of refugee hosting.

Topography is likewise central to Zeynep Türkyılmaz's essay on the fate of Ezidi communities during the past two hundred years. Investigating forms of Ezidi resistance against repeated *fermans* (pogroms), she argues that the refugee route was never exclusively a path of flight for minority communities in Iraqi Kurdistan: the refugee route constituted a means of survival and, as such, was a central feature of Ezidi culture. Ezidis moved horizontally through the land, retreating to new areas to escape persecution, but also up into the Shengal (Sinjar) highlands, in what may be thought of as a form of strategic transhumance. This practice allowed Ezidis to escape cyclical incursions by local marauders, official tax collectors, military conscription agents, and census-takers. Türkyılmaz traces this deeply rooted pattern of mobility to the present day and the genocide perpetrated on Ezidis by so-called Islamic State. However, the ensuing diaspora may have fundamentally transformed the refugee route, Türkyılmaz suggests. No longer predominantly a mode of survival, the refugee route may now augur the eradication of religious and cultural pluralism in the Middle East today.

In its treatment of literary and filmic responses to forced mobility, *Refugee Routes* observes that refugee experiences are often narrated according to distinct tropes. Recurring themes include persecution and suffering at home, packing and departure, the dangers of the journey, exploitation by people smugglers, the confiscation of possessions, route-finding, interpreting rumours, searching for sleeping and hiding places, practices of sharing and hospitality, and scenes of arrival. Nazan Maksudyan, in her biographical essay on the experiences of her great-grandmother

during the Armenian genocide, documents the fractured family's flight prompted by forced deportation orders (*tehcir*). It was while travelling from their home in the Anatolian village of Çengiler, near Bursa, to Der Zor in Syria, that her great-great-uncle, concealed as a girl, was revealed to be a boy and killed. Maksudyan observes that, for those deportees who survived, exploitation, hard labour, forced conversion to Islam, and physical and sexual abuse were common experiences. Yet, she suggests, the tenacity of people like her great-grandmother contributed to their survival. In contrast, Meltem Gürle's literary contribution 'Walk past the vines, past the orchards' adopts a more elegiac tone. Through its allusion to a poem by the Turkish poet Cemal Süreya, the essay captures the sentiments of a couple parting at a railway station – she to remain in German exile, he to return to Istanbul. Understated is the suffering implied by the impending separation. Yet, there are powerful intimations of what exile entails – the vagaries of memory, loneliness, anxieties about self-erasure, unwitting infelicities while adjusting to a new culture and language, and the longing for an alternative future, however unlikely. For all the certitudes that exile implies, Gürle's essay demurs about its meaning. Because their fate remains uncertain, the couple will disagree about the implications of the past for the present and future. Exile will remain a cipher.

Refugee Routes suggests that through collecting and comparing refugee accounts from a range of subjects and places, it may be possible to determine the extent to which these narratives exhibit common narrative features and so encapsulate universal aspects of refugee flight and exile. It might be asked, for instance, whether the resourcefulness identified in accounts of Armenian refugees finds a corollary in the Yiddish *macher*, the Polish *kombinator*, or the French *débrouillard*. A corresponding and less well-researched set of tropes can be traced in the collective memory of host communities. A potential set of themes centres, for example, on first encounters with refugees, levels of gratitude, women's status and treatment, child-rearing practices, indolence and the squandering of material resources, comparisons with autochthonous experiences of exile and migration, and self-positioning of the host as empathic and generous. Such tropes are explored in Christiane Steckenbiller's essay on Jenny Erpenbeck's 2015 *Gehen, ging, gegangen* and Bodo Kirchhoff's 2016 *Widerfahrnis*, novels that treat German attitudes towards the influx of refugees. Steckenbiller highlights the necessity for an historical reckoning with Germany's own colonial and fascist pasts. Current attitudes towards refugees are, she suggests, a measure of that unfinished project.

Analysing the representation of refugee experiences may shed light on their commonalities, but it can also contribute to a better understanding of cultural and historical specificities. Such findings are relevant to the ways in which asylum seekers' claims are processed. Narrowly prescribed by the Geneva Convention, the asylum applicant's account must adhere to a narrative pattern that foregrounds a 'well-founded fear' of persecution. The asylum interview protocol is thus likely to

be a critical determinant in how asylum seekers narrate their stories. Hande Gürses raises this point in relation to Philippe Falardeau's 2011 film *Monsieur Lazhar,* which reveals the difficulties faced by an Algerian asylum seeker in making his experiences of persecution and loss intelligible to listeners who have the power to determine his fate. The question thus arises as to whether the conditions of enquiry imposed by the asylum process help to shape the ways in which asylum seekers themselves come to view their own experiences. Further, it might be asked whether the asylum interview forms part of a larger regulatory apparatus that contributes to the state structuring of memory.

Refugee Routes recognizes a need to investigate refugeeism within a comparative transnational framework. The construction of a 'welcome culture' makes Germany, for example, the heritor of a hospitality discourse with antecedents in the Enlightenment and in earlier periods. Immanuel Kant, for example, argued that states were bound to admit newcomers and this 'right to arrive' would promote lasting world peace, a theme investigated in the exhibition treated in Vanessa Agnew's and Egemen Özbek's contribution (Kant, 1977, p. 214). The volume seeks a better understanding of how adjudications are made and how the tension between hospitality and self-preservation – welcoming and turning away – is played out in the historical as well as contemporary contexts. By investigating this nexus, *Refugee Routes* seeks to determine whether other forgotten discourses about the treatment of strangers are available for reanimation. It enquires into the paradigms available for commemorating refugee experiences and the need to identify potential sites to be marked for official remembrance. These might include boat landing places, camping spots, reception centres, camps and prisons, churches and private homes – sites of personal and collective significance that have hitherto been overlooked. It also investigates the ways in which memories are represented. Scenes of refugees crowding trains, taking leave, abandoning belongings, and being selected are redolent of the Holocaust, which is often, if problematically, drawn upon as a visual corpus for commemorating acts of unrelated mass violence, displacement, and suffering.

The numbers of refugees are predicted to grow exponentially in the coming decades as a result of deteriorating environmental conditions, conflict, hunger, repression, and state collapse. Internal displacement is also likely to increase due to climate change, making refugeeism and forced displacement an increasingly domestic problem. To date and across the globe, state policy has focused on tightening immigration regulations and revising the legal underpinnings of the state's international humanitarian commitments. In the long run, however, such measures are unlikely to assuage public anxieties about the impact of refugees on host societies or allay concerns about the erosion of civil liberties and the incarceration and deaths of asylum seekers (Tazreiter, 2015; Weber and Pickering, 2011). By addressing these issues, *Refugee Routes* intervenes in public debate, drawing atten-

tion to the refugee, asylum seeker, exile, and forced migrant as individual subjects with respective sets of memories, hopes, needs and prospects, and a place in the national narrative.

Responses to the perceived refugee crisis have put migration discourse at the centre of international debate. *Refugee Routes* contributes to the transnational study of refugeeism and forced migration by investigating attitudes, responses, practices, and experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, and 'irregular' migrants. Historicizing refugeeism and forced migration can change perceptions about what it means to be displaced. This has benefits for the displaced. But historicizing refugeeism and forced migration also pays dividends to those we might think of as the 'emplaced' – those prior-comers, rooted in place, whose autochthony is so often taken as given. By establishing refugeeism as the object of reenactment and commemoration, the volume contributes to a more expansive memory culture – one that reminds today's emplaced that they or their ancestors, too, were once on the move. Once they also sought safe places to sleep and eat and settle. Once these prospective hosts were themselves the recipients of hospitality.

It is in this spirit that Kader Konuk reports on the work of the Academy in Exile, an initiative founded in Germany in 2017 to support intellectuals persecuted as a result of their work on human rights, democracy, and freedom of enquiry, or as a result of what she refers to as their commitment to 'critical thinking' more generally. Drawing inspiration from efforts during the Second World War to rescue Jewish, communist, and other scholars endangered by fascism, Konuk stresses the necessity of supporting at-risk individuals in the current conjuncture. Offering a place of refuge and intellectual exchange redounds to the individual and to host institutions. But, she argues, in fostering cohorts of exiles what is also preserved are communal ties, memories, cultural practices, and bodies of knowledge. Traditions of critical and secular thinking, once alive in Turkey and elsewhere but now under threat, may be cultivated abroad – held in readiness for a time when they might be returned to their native soil. Similarly, Jane O. Newman traces the history of mid-twentieth-century scholar rescue initiatives, describing efforts in the United States to support at-risk scholars in resisting the challenge of ever more repressive migration policies and the criminalization of aid provision to refugees. Albeit predicated on a human rights 'regime' that fell, and still falls, short, there is a case to be made for continuing this work even when the path to asylum is barred. Structures and support networks can be held in abeyance until governmental policies change and public attitudes soften. Testifying to this from personal experience, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's contribution, 'Hunted Scholarship: How Fugitive Ideas Change the World', catalogues a long personal history of challenging authority and promoting academic freedom in Kenya. The price paid by him and others has ranged from self-imposed and enforced exile, imprisonment, physical assault, surveillance, and professional and publishing bans to homelessness and stateless-

ness. Ngũgĩ stresses that by 'shelter[ing] a fugitive idea', it is not only the outspoken critic, knowledge producer, or creative thinker who is spared; it is his or her vital contribution to human flourishing. Offering sanctuary preserves the right of scholars and independent-minded people everywhere to ask uncomfortable questions in pursuit of truth.

If this puts the burden on individuals to offer aid and elevates the displaced person to the object of individualized humanitarian concern, Aslı Iğsız issues a caution. In keeping with the point made by Debarati Sanyal, Iğsız argues in her contribution on refugee management, eugenics, and demography that there are disturbing historical continuities in the configuration of refugees as either undesirable or saveable. *Refugee Routes* concludes that global mass mobility, already at historically unprecedented levels, will only increase as the effects of climate change spill into worsening social and political discord. It remains to be seen whether the emplaced respond, as is currently the case, with ever-intensified security and surveillance measures, border externalization, and populist vitriol directed at the displaced. The refugee route – that hard slog of hope – offers a possibility of disambiguating governmental securitarianism from humanitarian aid. In the refugee route, we seek more productive forms of exchange and political subjectivity and a path to the systemic redress of global resource inequality.

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