



# Abstracts

## Can migrants speak?

### **Parole, Narratives and Performances.**

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In opposition to a media, state and police conception of the speech (*parole*) of exiled people, a plethora of academic and artistic productions related to migration issues have shaped a new approach to mobility and language practices in Europe.

By *freeing the speech* of exiled people themselves, by restoring subjectivities through life narratives in particular, these works (texts, photographic exhibitions, plays, films, analyses, etc.) offer a different perspective on women and men whose discourse and registers of language (Agha 1999) have long been obscured or erased.

Many questions remain, however, regarding the status of these instances of speech: who is speaking, to whom, under what conditions, with what interests in mind? Within these new configurations (staging and the production of narratives or images), the position of exiled people is not always very clear: whereas the goal of authors is often to "better understand" the intentions of the migrants in order to reinforce an "intercultural" perspective, a rather one-sided point of view persists. Exilees remain subjugated figures, objects of studies thought and constructed by Europeans. The North-South relationship, reproducing postcolonial models, conditions most of these approaches.

How can one account for *free speech* (*parole libre*) without subjecting it to postcolonial power relations? To answer this question, it is necessary to highlight the assemblages of other types of productions that result from the co-construction of knowledge and of aesthetic and artistic productions. By shifting gazes and being mobile, the idea will then be to start out from countries effected by mobility in order to observe language practices as social practices, where they emerge locally through cinema, radio, songs, rap, performances, novels, etc.

In this lecture, I will focus my attention on a number of musical, theatrical, cinematographic, poetic and vocal experiences in West Africa (Senegal, Mali, Cape Verde, Niger) apprehended through a political sociolinguistic approach (Canut, Danos, Him-Aquilli, Panis 2018) bringing together linguistic anthropology (in particular metapragmatics: Silverstein 1993, Irvine and Gal 2000) and French discourse analysis (Pêcheux and Fuchs 1975).

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## Exilic Aesthetics and Agency: On Drawing Voice in Refugee Graphic Narratives

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The waves of recent and less recent migratory ‘crises’ have been extensively covered and much documented in various media avenues and outlets, ranging from sensationalist approaches to more in-depth and multi-sided analyses.

My presentation seeks to focus on the emergence and development of a less examined popular sub-genre, namely the testimonial/refugee graphic narrative, which I investigate in order to examine how conflict, migration, and memory are depicted and visualised as first-hand accounts in an often complex and problematised manner.

By drawing analytical examples from the works of Fabien Toulme (*The Odyssey of Hakim*), Ali Fitzgerald (*Drawn to Berlin- Comics Workshops in Refugee Shelters*), and Thi Bui (*The Best We Could Do*), I argue that this growing sub-genre is able to offer creative forms of expression attending the current migrations, all while offering historical depth to the understanding of the cultural roots of recent movements and experiences. Through adopting a variety of styles, both in the storytelling and narrative styles but also in the drawing techniques, these stories share in common the centrality of the testimonial element, focusing for example on childhood memories, the recounting of war-related events, and the consequences of the war, amongst which there emerges the decision to migrate to a European country and the subsequent portrayal of the ‘new’ life.

This presentation ultimately reflects on how these visual narratives embedded in the context of past or current wars and migration contribute to the ongoing debates on migration in Europe, and how this particular sub-genre lends its form to the articulation of voice and uniqueness of experience.

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## Memory, Space and Movement in Takoua Ben Mohamed's Transnational Graphic Novel *La Rivoluzione dei Gelsomini*.

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Within the growing field of transnational comics culture, exemplified by the great success of works such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, not enough attention has been devoted yet to the Italian production. This paper applies a transnational perspective to the reading of Takoua Ben Mohamed's latest graphic novel, *La Rivoluzione dei Gelsomini* (2018).

Through the visual and verbal narrative of her family's story, and of her own personal trajectory from Tunisia to Italy – but also backwards from Italy to Tunisia in the retrospective narrative movement of the book – Takoua complicates a linear conception of the migratory journey, which emerges as both (or neither) an outward or (nor) a return journey. By showing the intimate entanglement of her Tunisian past and her Italian present, pointing at the same time towards a future that cannot be contained in neither of the two national borders, Takoua questions a singular and clearly bounded definition of Italian identity, while also establishing a link between gender and mobility within the Italian postcolonial travel narrative.

*La rivoluzione dei Gelsomini* is then an example of what Simon Gikandi defines as 'decentered narratives', in which transnational movements create 'new sites of identity' (2001). The graphic form of the novel is crucial in this respect, as words and images compete within the space of the page, diffracting meaning and challenging interpretation. Through a series of maps which either lack definite points of departure and arrival or fail to show a clear way of getting from one to the other, the novel visualizes the non-linear movement of Takoua's personal and collective memory; a memory that cannot be attached to a singular space, but rather constantly travels, 'archiving itself rhizomatically'. (Creet and Kitzmann: 2014)

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## Migration in Graphic Enactments

Inge Lanslots, KU Leuven

In their introduction to *Borderities and the Politics of Contemporary Mobile Borders*, Amilhat-Szary and Giraut conclude that “it is time to rethink the border” (2015: 5) because the place of enactment of that border has changed far more than its “functions of division, regulation and control” (2015: 2-3). This claim is highly illustrative of the current debate on the porosity or the permeability of the U.S. border (Dear 2013), which not only revolves around transnational migration experiences, but also around all types of flows (economic exchanges, criminal activities, artistic performances...).

The present paper focuses on seven graphic narratives (Eisner 2008) that render these doings and practices. It is our working hypothesis that these graphic narratives represent traumatic aspects of migration across borders, a high sense of displacement and a troubled connection to roots (Knowles, Peacock & Earle 2016; Serrano 2018) combining audiovisual and verbal strategies in different ways (Grant 2012). Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* (2006), for instance, seems to borrow the no longer conventional ‘language’ of old pictorial archives presenting a very detailed series of sepia-toned pictures which recall early 20<sup>th</sup> century old photographs. Moreover, the speechless *The Arrival* puts the reader in the role of the migrant to the extent that both the characters as the audience have to decipher the migration process (Vokatis 2015). Conversely, the other contemporary graphic novels taken into consideration tend to be mono- or multilingual narratives, in which the use of English often prevails (Gramling 2016).

Nonetheless, all these multimodal representations tend to transcend individual memories on migration and try to question linguistic boundaries re-enacting the permeable border.

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## Where Is Home If You Don't Feel *Han*: Emotional Transculturation In Contemporary Korean American Novels

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Even though we learn to recognize and regulate emotions in cultural settings, research in transculturation tends to overlook the role played by emotions in cultural processes. In the Korean language, one negative emotion equivalent to anger is called *han*. I suggest there is a recurring pattern of *han* as a catalyst for the outsider position of women in contemporary Korean American literature. I understand *han* as a culturally constructed emotion, which in literature problematizes existing racial and gendered constructions. Focusing on *Free Food for Millionaires* by Min Jin Lee and *Re: Jane* by Patricia Park, I argue that the central conflict of six Korean American novels is between *han* (descent) and love (consent). Inspired by Werner Sollors' writings on the role of ethnicity in American literature, I suggest that for the characters of these novels, *han* is portrayed as an involuntarily reminder of ethnic descent that traps them in subversive behaviour. As a result, the pressing concern for the female characters is finding ways to resolve *han*, or anger, so that she avoids the outsider position she is put in. In order to offer a different venue into understanding how we continue to essentialize culturally constructed categories, I formulate the term "emotional transculturation". I propose that by focusing on how emotions are *both* created and lost in a diasporic setting, we are able to understand the existence of tension present in a multicultural setting, and accept a sense of home without having to choose between an artificially binary of cultures.

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## Transnational artist's identity and the "border art" of Guillermo Gomez-Peña

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My presentation will focus on the identity issues of the transnational artist through the analysis of a paradigmatic figure of the contemporary American and international art scene, Guillermo Gomez-Peña. A Chicano artist born in Mexico in 1955 and immigrated to the United States in 1978, he has developed what he calls a "border art", notably through his live or video performances and with his migrant artists collective called La Pocha Nostra.

By his unique grotesque irony and provocative theatricality, the artist himself plays a series of characters, such as the Ethno-Cyborg, the Binational Boxer or El Mex-terminator, which condense all the stereotypical representations of the Chicano image by a juxtaposition of exoticism, primitivism, techno-futurism, and "reverse ethnography". Gomez-Peña aims to interrogate the public on the problematic self-definition of the migrant identity, always moving between two countries, two cultures, and two languages and trapped in fixed colonial and postcolonial representations. The transnational artist needs to use alternative languages (Spanglish for example), cultures (Chicano), aesthetics (hybrid and queer) and alliances (amongst the "peripheries") in order to resist the conformism of an illusory dominant assimilation.

I will analyse how Gomez-Peña builds his art as an identity ritual in a global and postcolonial world that requires taking into account the multiplicity of identities. A staging of oneself as Other to point out the absurdity and the political danger of the construction of all essentialism.

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## The (New) Migrant: Contemporary Visual Artists Beyond Turkey

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“Migration is a historical as well as a trans-historical concept: transhistorical in the sense that people and cultural forms have always migrated; historical in the sense that the character of migration has changed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While the term migration refers to population movements either within nation states or across their borders, modern migration movements are more complex and diverse.”<sup>1</sup> The art world boasts of many ‘immigrant’ artists, now traveling and working between the West and the non-West, North, and South. I would like to suggest a new way of thinking about the immigration experience: not as a fixed and static point or a landing, but rather as a dynamic trajectory. This presentation will focus on mobility and migration from Turkey to Europe and its role in the making of trans-and international identities. It specifically investigates the articulation and dynamics of hyphenated European-Turkish identities, and new forms of European and diasporic citizenship through the work and biographies of contemporary visual artists originally from Turkey who have left their ‘home’ for various reasons (migration, education, or artist residencies). What makes these artists particularly pertinent for an investigation of new forms of identity, citizenship-making, and belonging in contemporary Europe is that their art cannot exist without either Europe or Turkey. Concentrating on their art as ‘snap shots,’ this presentation focuses on the politics of belonging through an investigation of how these artistic trajectories are mapped in a transnational context through different cities such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, and Istanbul.

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## **Translating migration, agency and language into the visual: artistic experimentations and the Italian diaspora across the work**

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The Italian Australian communities in across the world have currently attracted academic attention as key in understanding Italian migration, culture and identity. Rando and Turcotte (2007) underline ‘the serious gap in research activity’ (2007: 11) and invite ‘to map an understanding of the Italian experience onto the broader picture of diasporic stories, though with an anchor in the Australian-Italian experience’ (2007: 10). Taking my cue from these scholars, I aim to use translation as a framework to cast light on stories of migration and artistic agency, with specific attention to Italian Australia visual artists, operating between Melbourne and New York. I will present the outcome of the interviews recently conducted in Australia and reflect on their modes of artistic expression and work. How do their migrant past, mobile life and creative performances inform and display their sense of be-longing while straddling multiple worlds? What kind of transcultural/transnational practices are embedded and displayed in their work? What kind of social spaces host and appreciate their art? And, finally, how can translation, as a mode of transcultural signification, multilingual practice and intermedia transfer, shape their artistic production? Inspired by their migrant background and practices of translation, these visual artists help us map our understanding of migration across generations, times and spaces. The paper will also explore the ways in which these artists encourage their viewers to reflect on language diversity and intercultural identity in a globalized and mobile society. Finally, it will offer an opportunity to discuss the interconnections between translation, mobility, migration, agency, language and identity through the lens of Italian Australian visual artists operating between Melbourne and New York. Their invaluable contribution to the creative industries helps us not only imagine the past and future of Italian communities in Australia but also across the world.

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## The Italian literary representations of the migrants' journeys of hope through the Mediterranean

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In my contribution I offer an overview of the Italian literary representations of the migrants' journeys of hope through the Mediterranean (subcategory of the literature of migration). I outline their evolution and illustrate the recurring patterns of their formal, thematic and sociological characteristics. Some of those characteristics include: the hybridization of genres, the documentary poetics, the combination of elements of fiction and non-fiction, the ethical, epic and narrative shifts, the authors' intention to act on reality, the centrality of human experience and the awareness of the partiality of truth. I support the thesis that many of those characteristics are largely explained by the return of the figure of the storyteller, whose disappearance Walter Benjamin revealed in the essay "The Storyteller: reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov".

One of the most interesting aspect that emerge from my explorations is that in the Italian literary representations the so-called boat people, which in the mediatic and academic discourse are often perceived and represented as desperate, victims or bare life; are instead represented as heroes, new Ulysses, revolutionary subjects and messianic figures.

## Aesthetic trope(s) of the Sea

Khalil Hammoudi

This paper sheds light on one major aesthetic trope of the sea, which is that of triggering what we call *transcultural memory*. Fred D'Aguiar's commentary that "the sea currents turn pages of memory" reveals that the element of the sea historically and temporally "accumulates", "entangles", and causes "resonances", "travelling frequencies", "echoes", and "reverberations" of memory and memory practices. The repeated waves of the sea refresh and continuously renew pages of memory. The paper seeks to entangle (or disentangle) Caribbean and Mediterranean imaginaries, which are aesthetically documented through "liquefied" and fluid narratives of migration. *Transcultural memory* allows one to understand the Caribbean and the Mediterranean in terms of overlapped territories and intertwined histories. This shows the accumulated, continued, repeated, and further developed contemporary embodiments of what is known as the Middle Passage. In this context, *transcultural memory* allows one to draw, for example, the analogy between 18th century Caribbean (migratory processes) and more recent contemporary Mediterranean mobilities to Europe. I will refer to Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997) (the examples of novels highlighting the Middle Passage are numerous) and try to read it analogically and relationally (and not necessarily comparatively) with a more recent contemporary novel, which is Joseph Onokpasa' *Across the Mediterranean Sea* (2016). With reference to these two works, this paper explores the kind of historical repetitions and temporal likenesses provided by sea narratives. Developed through narratives of migration and exile, transcultural memory stresses the (re)currence of sea currents and the (re)currence (repetition) of waves of migration.

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## The trans-national Bildungsroman in Italian literature

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I research the queering of the Bildungsroman, a genre that traces the protagonist's journey from youth to maturity, in the context of Italian migration literature. The Bildungsroman narrates processes of both identity formation and social integration, which can conflict with each other. The emphasis on personal growth affords ample potential for exploring various signifiers, intersections and conflicts of identity, including gender, sexuality, class and race. Yet by the 1900s, this genre privileged European, bourgeois and heteronormative male experience. Nevertheless, multiculturalism and the feminist movement introduced a new 'Mestiza' consciousness and set of subjecthoods to this literary form.

This paper examines *Adua* by Scego and *Il Paese dove non si muore mai* by Vorpsi. Both authors narrate their heroines' journeys from former colonies, Somalia and Albania respectively, to Italy. I posit that these writers realise the subversive potential of using this novel form to discredit its dominant social codes and insufficient paradigms that hinder the developing personalities of migrant and postcolonial subjects. My central claim is that these protagonists uproot themselves by challenging the patriarchal values of their own societies, and thereby, in Anzaldúa's terms, participate in creating a Mestiza literary culture. Both narratives are marked by the characters' fragmented sense of national identity and belonging through decolonisation, the demise of repressive regimes and the diasporic condition. Vorpsi's choice to write in Italian (her second language) and both authors' use of multiple narrative perspectives create a disjointed, distancing effect. These literary devices challenge conventions of becoming as an individualistic, linear process.

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## 'Talking back' to transnational discrimination: artistic practices of the female Calabrian-Australian diaspora.

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My research explores the work of two Calabrian-Australians, an artist and an author, and how they represent the first and second-generation Calabrian-Australian female diaspora. Luci Callipari-Marcuzzo is an artist and academic whose 'multidisciplinary practice-based research explores traditional methods of "making" and "women's work"'. In her blog *Kindred Link* Luci's cousin, Maria Callipari, reflects on how Calabrian identity is reproduced by her family today, for example through her mother's Calabrian foodstuffs business, and the value of this cultural preservation. My paper looks at how their work imagines and reenacts the experiences of different generations of the diaspora in artistic processes that transcend space and time to create meaning. In turn, I examine how these works challenge historic and transnational constructions of Calabrian identity as 'backwards' in Italy and Australia. Calabrian identity is still marginal within Italy, the result of a historic discourse of racialised 'otherness' and backwardness. Upon entry into Australia from the 1950s Calabrians faced racial discrimination through the 'White Australia' policy but today the diaspora enjoys high socio-economic status. The ultimate aim of this paper then is to delineate how and where these works 'talk back' to constructed Calabrian 'backwardness' through their 'reimagining' of Calabrian identity. Such exploration attempts to gauge how artistic practice is employed in a legitimising process of identity formation by diasporic subjects who are now partially removed from their marginal Calabrian identity. Furthermore, this paper examines how artistic processes rooted in the past become acts of the present, thereby creating a 'new', contemporary Calabrian-Australian identity.

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## Capturing Berserkería and Amor Code-Switching and Migrant Belonging in Junot Díaz

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The narrator of many of Junot Díaz's short stories, Yuniors, switches and swerves between Spanish and English, sometimes including single Spanish words in English sentences, but more often mixing the languages in such a thorough way that any clear division between them appears suspended. Despite the seeming ease of such code-switching, the question of which language to speak, how to speak it, and to whom, is highly fraught in Díaz's work. Characters in the Dominican-American community in New Jersey which Díaz depicts frequently use each other's knowledge of Spanish to gauge the other person's *Dominicanidad*, and their linguistic swagger to disparage women. Spanish can thus both bind together and divide the members of this "London Terrace multi-verse" (Saldívar 2016: 334). Drawing on the "new mobility paradigm" (Urry/Sheller 2006), I want to analyze the linguistic mobility which Díaz's characters enact on the micro level of individual sentences and the macro level of their day-to-day lives, and show how this particular kind of mobility is a mirror and a continuation of the geographical mobility that took place in their past. By linking this analysis to Emily Apter's concept of *Untranslatables*, I will be able to further probe the characters' position, which is simultaneously transnational and "site-specific" (Apter 2013: 42). Yuniors and his friends are linguistically mobile because they used to be geographically mobile, they use *Untranslatables* to make legible their otherwise untranslatable situation caught between between Spanish and English in New Jersey, and doing so they are building a community with some while excluding others.

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## Engaging in cities through mural visual street art and migration

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This paper taps into an academic take on visual street art as a site of construction of social meaning and narration of multiple experiences and views of migration. Thought-provoking murals and graffiti represent and challenge socio-political aspects of urban life, as they remap citizens' views and actions through visual and verbal discourse. Europe offers street artists a range of urban settings and encourages continuous processes of translation and migration of ideas and practices across borders. In particular, the internal/external dialogues with and among such cities as Rome and Palermo (IT), London and Bristol (UK), Antwerp and Brussels (BE) create stimulating transnational forums where socio-political concerns and ideological views of mobility and belongings are played out and visually performed. Murals and graffiti invite reflection and action on urban development and diversity, as they raise public awareness of the city's past-present-future at the interface between European supranational and interregional settings and national traditions. We aim to discuss urban street art scenes between and within the aforementioned European metropolis and zoom in on topical socio-cultural issues, including migration, linguistic diversity and grassroots initiatives building a civil and ethical counterpart to policy making in and about the city. To sum up, our paper will look at the role of visual street art as locus of socio-political contestation and transformation and as narratives of migration, diaporic phenomena of artistic practices, cross-pollination and translational performances, including artistic and linguistic experimentation and intermedial recontextualization of visual and verbal genres into urban spheres.



## Migrant Stories between the Archive and the Garbage Dump in the Mediterranean

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What stories do the objects discarded, sequestered, or lost in the migrant passage across the Mediterranean tell us? What narratives do they construct about the journey and the people that make it? How do these objects contribute to collective memory formation? In this paper, I address these questions in relation to the refuse that migrants leave behind on the island of Lampedusa. I engage critically with the idea of the archive and its connections to memory, historical knowledge, and power, in dialogue with Benjamin, Foucault, Derrida, Ricoeur, as well as postcolonial reconsiderations of the archive by Spivak and A. Appadurai, and recent work by Valeria Luiselli and Jason De León. I argue that the abandoned items, the vessels, seized and dumped into Lampedusa's "boat cemetery," the clothes that immigration officials require migrants to shed, are traces of "transience and death while at the same time marking the future" (Merewether 2006). Through the work of migrant-rights activists and artists, indeed these objects acquire an afterlife in the form of exhibits—as in the Porto M space in Lampedusa—or as material reworked into art—as in the case of the Lampedusa cross hosted in the British Museum. In this sense, these objects open up a space of futurity that resonates with Appadurai's notion of the aspirational quality of archives. In analyzing a series of artistic and archival experiences that engage with migrants' discarded belongings, I show how they contribute to creating a heterogeneous, transnational community whose memories establish counter-narratives of migration and displacement.

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## **“Armenia here and there”: Transcultural memory in contemporary Armenian cinematography.**

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1983 : A documentary about the Armenian diaspora in France was broadcast on prime time in French television. The film caused a stir in the Armenian community: It was deemed too revealing of the Armenian private mourning; the harboring of grievance and the proof of existence of Armenian “enclaves” was perceived as damaging for integration by many French-Armenians. The narrative unveils typical patterns of migration and exile, such as the rupture from the past, the substitution of the lost country and nostalgia. By means of several *mise en abyme* and a map installation broadcasting multiple videos of life in the late Ottoman Empire and testimonies from France and Soviet Armenia the film becomes a carrier of memory, remapping the routes of exile of the Armenians. The film creates memory connections by juxtaposing the realities and revealing the mixing of memories of the Armenians as former Ottoman and current French and Soviet citizens as well as the reconstruction of French and Armenian identity and cultural memory. Finally, it represents the Armenian nation as a transnational entity, revealing the dynamics of memory between Anatolian Turkey as the lost homeland, Soviet Armenia as an *ersatz* of an Armenian state where survivors found refuge and France as a homeland of French-Armenian citizens where the memory of the Armenian exile and genocide is becoming part of the collective memory.

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## **The Holberg Lecture: Never Again: Refusing Race and Salvaging the Human**

Lecture by the 2019 Holberg Laureate Paul Gilroy, Professor of American and English Literature, King's College London.

Employing the cosmopolitan work by W.E.B. Du Bois as a starting point, this lecture surveys the “populist” politics of race and nation in contemporary Europe. With those growing perils in mind, it pleads for serious, academic engagement with the resurgence of fascism in forms that can be difficult to identify.

It will suggest that historical scholarship centred on cultural processes can play a pivotal role in producing compelling responses to those dangers. However, answering racism and nationalism is not undertaken to serve the interests of their immediate victims but to defend and deepen democratic institutions and habits. The traditional concerns of broad, humanistic education are still required by today's open-ended inquiries into the limits and entanglements of the human. That educational mission remains important not just for the answers it gives to racism, but also for the contribution it can make to the practical problems associated with the social effects of environmental crisis.

For more information about the Holberg prize program, please see <https://www.holbergprisen.no/en/holberg-week-2019>