

PostHeimat NETWORK MEETING

05 - 08 March 2020

Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin

Encounter #4

REPORT



Encounter #4 was organized and designed as an intensive gathering of the members and guests, building upon the processes of the previous encounter work meetings in Mülheim and Munich and to continue discussing, exchanging and thinking collectively on meanings of intersectional diversity and post-colonialism, in relation to the ongoing shifting contexts in the German theater scene.

Main goals and plans for the Encounter#4 in Berlin were:

- To work intensively on a *Mission Statement* and work paper which included goals and ideas of the PostHeimat Network.
- To concretize the internal work structure and network structure (based upon the meeting in Hamburg in February 2020)
- To work intensively on the website, add and provide content for an launch to the public.
- To concretize the profile and public standpoint of the PostHeimat network

- To continue the research, engagement of the research of the *Research Group* within the network and website.
- To share collectively what the network sub-working groups have been working on, since the last encounter.

The Encounter#4 was embedded within a broad public program and brought together professionals from the German speaking world, which came from Mülheim, Göttingen, Berlin, Zurich and Hamburg.



Public Program - The Art of (En)Countering

Encounter #4 was set - up within a broad and very successful public program, that attracted many different audiences and communities. The public program was curated and organized by Monica Marotta and Christopher - Fares Köhler. The program consisted of readings, talks, performances and an art installation that was set up throughout the entire Encounter#4 in the Studio Я Foyer. The idea of the programs was to show the networks topics and discourses. Topics of migration, refuge, exile, multilingualism, intersectionality and post-colonialism were discussed and mirrored within all public events.

1. Art Installation

Colonial Neighbours (in collaboration with [SAVVY Contemporary](#) and the artist Lizza May David)

05.03. - 08.03.2020

Studio A Foyer

The fragment series is a series of interventions in and out of SAVVY Contemporary's long term collective archive project on German colonial history. Artists, researchers, activists, and cultural producers are invited to engage with the *Colonial Neighbours* archive, activating and critically contributing to the project. In the sixth edition of the F R A G M E N T S series, Berlin based artist Lizza May David explores the notion of representation of domestic workers. In her piece »Looking Inwards« (2008), we experience an intimate portrait of the working and living space of a domestic helper (the artist's aunt) in Hong Kong. Filming within the interior of her employer's household including the furniture, view from the window and personal belongings, the video visualizes how power relations are interconnected with private space.

Lizza May David's work is set in conversation with 3 editions of objects from the *Colonial Neighbours* archive. The journal *Kolonie und Heimat* (1907-1920) was published by the *Frauenbund der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft (Women's Association of German Colonial Society)*, which was one of the most influential organizations of the German empire that campaigned for an expansive colonialist policy. It shows clearly how race and gender constructions were established on different levels and fields of colonial policies: on the example of labor policies, education and moralities, through the discourse of hygiene, purity and health and within the field of ethnology, photography and advertisement.

As the archive project got invited to engage with the PostHeimat ENCOUNTER #4, a conversation between Lizza May David's intimate portrait of an individual that claims space in the process of writing her own story and the oppressive white narrative that perpetually shape the place of the other. This constellation invites to reflect on colonial entanglements in regards to how we give space for other bodies' knowledges that are inscribed IN and ON them.

2. Performances

Performance I - Salty Roads

05.03.2020

Studio A (Arabic with engl. and ger. Surtitles)

Text + Directing: Bashar Murkus

With: Maryam Abu Khaled (Exil Ensemble), Karim Daoud (Exil Ensemble), Shaden Kanboura

Music: Faraj Suleiman / Live Music: Daniel Kahn

In the *Mythen der Wirklichkeit* (Myths of Reality) series, Palestinian director Bashar Murkus and his team investigate the sea as a source of yesterday's and today's mythologies. It's not only religious and romantic stories that have emerged from the sea. Since ancient times, their shores have also been the place for political debates about borders, homelands and divisions.

Performance II - Reine Formsache

Collective Ma'louba

07.03.2020

Container

Guest Performance by Collective Ma'louba (Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany)

Directing: Waël Ali Text: Mudar Alhaggi & Ensemble

With: Amal Omran & Mouayad Roumieh

Two Syrian theatre actors have been living in Europe for several years. They share a space and a story. What will we do now and what will we represent? How can we continue to perform? Can we continue to perform at all? And what if? What if the actress Amal Omran, who is famous in her country, decides to return to Syria, is arrested at the border and interrogated by an officer? Would this interrogation really be possible? During the performative interrogation, Amal Omran recalls her life in the theatre - from her beginnings in Damascus in the 1980s to this very moment on stage. Simultaneously, the story of a country exposed to violent political events is told. REINE FORMSACHE searches for traces of its own history and raises questions of memory, politics, power and language.

Performance III - Die Verlobung in St. Domingo

08.03.2020

Container

Text: Necati Öziri against Heinrich von Kleist

Directing: Sebastian Nübling Stage: Muriel Gerstner Costumes: Pascal Martin Music: Lars Wittershagen

With: Mariam Abu Khaled (Exil Ensemble), Kenda Hmeidan (Exil Ensemble), Falilou Seck, Dominic Hartmann, Dagna Litzenberger Vinet, Cigdem Teke

Revolution is raging in Haiti. After more than a hundred years of slavery, the subjugated populace is fighting for freedom. One night, young Gustav, a nobleman from Switzerland, knocks at the door of Toni, foster daughter of one of the revolutionary leaders, asking for protection while escaping from the revolutionary troops... Toni must decide – there's no time for revolutionary romanticism. In "Die Verlobung in Santo Domingo" (Betrothal in St. Domingo, 1811), Heinrich von Kleist's novella published shortly after the French Revolution, the author recounts a dramatic love story against a backdrop of revolution, and describes two clear fronts: white versus black, good versus evil, order versus anarchy. Yet how will the story go when it isn't clear who is friend or foe when it comes to enlightened values? In his new play, Necati Öziri questions supposedly unambiguous positions and interprets the story with a new level of opposition that invites us to engage in a modern-day discussion about violence and counter-violence.

3. Talks, Panel and Readings

Artist Talk - Language Politics

05.03.2020

Studio Я

With: Yvonne Griesel (Sprachspiel), Oliver Kontny (Translator, TAZ) und Bashar Murkus (Kashabi Theatre) Moderation: Christopher-Fares Köhler

Dealing with multilingualism and translation is of increasing importance in the performing arts. Artists, groups and institutions that work transnationally cast the spotlight on challenges, opportunities and significance of language. In the Arabic-language play *Salty Roads*, Palestinian director Bashar Murkus and his team explore the sea as the origin of yesterday and today and investigates which political debates about borders, homelands and divisions are waged there. Who is speaking here? What languages do we speak, perform and work with? Who is heard? What does it mean to translate in an artistic context? Together with director Bashar Murkus and translators Yvonne Griesel and Oliver Kontny, we talked about the significance of multilingualism, the politics of language(s) and possibilities for the future.

Bashar Murkus talked about the importance of language and his artistic and political work within the Khashabi Theater in Haifa. Yvonne Griesel, who is one of the most important figures in German theater concerning translation and surtitling for the theater and performance art, talked about the progression and immense importance of multilingualism within this art field. Oliver Kontny enabled us to find the connection between translation for the theater and translation for publications such as the daily newspaper *TAZ*. Translation also shows how the power of language is used and gives access to information.

Panel - (En)Countering the Future

06.03.2020

Studio Я

With: Emre Akal (Staatstheater Ayşe X), Lara-Sophie Milagro (Label Noir), Kenda Hmeidan (Exil Ensemble), Elena Agudio (SAVVY Contemporary) Moderation: Sophie Diesselhorst (nachtkritik), Jonas Tinius (CARMAH)

For some time now, diversity has been shaping the investigations and debates in the theatre, academic institutions, literature and visual arts in equal measure. Questions of representation, visibility, power and participation open up a space for considering future artistic structures, aesthetics and funding opportunities. But what does it really mean to work in an intersectional way that supports diversity? In this panel discussion we encountered participants and approaches from various art movements, groups and institutions, identifying potential concepts and thoughts that could pave the way for transcultural, diverse, multilingual future spaces for art and thought.

Kenda Hmeidan of the Exil Ensemble opened the panel with a Keynote of a text that she wrote about her experiences working in German theater. Emre Akal talked about Ayşe X and the structure of his collective. Lara-Sophie Milagro shared her experiences and ideas of working as a B-PoC actress and her work on intersectional diversity. She also talked about the work of addressing the Film Academy Jury 2020 and proposing a diverse jury for 2021 ([#diversitysowhite](#))

Elena Audio discussed the importance of post-colonial and diverse work of SAVVY Contemporary within the art world and introduced the art installation *Colonial Neighbours*. The archive is a participatory, radical archive, a collection of objects and immaterial objects, gathered from donations or finding objects at flea markets, and dealing with the ‚amnesia‘ of colonization. Lizza May David also spoke about her approach towards the work and the archive. In which she stated that „Looking Inwards“ is one approach to the archive - the video wants to empower and change the narratives of domestic workers in the Philippines, giving her, the aunt of the artist, a voice rather and changing the realm of narratives we have today.

Reading - Reading Resistance

06.03.2020

Studio Я

With: Amahl Raphael Khouri, Liwaa Yazji and Özlem Özgül Dündar

In Conversation with. Deniz Utlu

In Arabic, English and German

Three authors* read and presented their texts and engaged in a discussion with the author Deniz Utlu. From different angles they deal with queerness, migration, politics, history(ies), identities and memories and shed light on the resistant power of writing in their texts.

Amahl Raphael Khouri read from their work in progress text called *Behold the Magical Power of Jeff Goldblum* in which they talk about being transgender in the Arabic world. Identity, dark comedy and philosophy are intertwined topics within Khouri's Text.

Liwaa Yazji read an excerpt from *The Apples of my Grandmother*, in which she recollected memories of her own grandmother into a autofictional stream of consciousness on war, feminism and identity.

Özlem Özgül Dündar read excerpts from her stage play *türken, feuer, based on the real life arson attack in Solingen (1993)*. Dündar tells the fictitious story of different mothers and perspectives, based on the real life event.



The Workshops

1.) Cultural Policy Group

The cultural policy group continued working on the ideas and the basis of a IDA (Intersectional - Diversity Act) and a „Mission Statement“ that were discussed and written within the Encounters #2 #3. The group decided to focus the workshop work on concretizing the idea and identity of the network and its goals and to formulate this for as the „About“ page of the networks page.

Here follows the text that was produced within the group:

PostHeimat is a continuously developing and progressing network in the field of performing arts, addressing the topics of migration, refuge, identity, multilingualism, and power structures within artistic practices and institutions.

PostHeimat was established in 2018 by the artistic groups BOAT PEOPLE PROJEKT (Göttingen), COLLECTIVE MA'LOUBA (Mülheim an der Ruhr), EXIL ENSEMBLE (Berlin), HAJUSOM (Hamburg), OPEN BORDER ENSEMBLE (Munich) and RUHRORTER (Mülheim an der Ruhr). More artists, groups, institutions, and researchers are becoming part of the network.

PostHeimat supports artistic exchange and provides information across the performing arts by creating frameworks for collaboration and organising Encounters with spaces for artistic performances, discussions, panels, and research.

PostHeimat seeks to empower performing arts collectives, artists, producers, researchers, and institutions to work in solidarity.

PostHeimat is rethinking and questioning the performing arts field through an intersectional approach.

PostHeimat's understanding of diversity discourse is not only based on the idea of race and background but refers to Kimberlé Crenshaw's coined term of "Intersectionality" (1986). It has become one of the most influential terms in the discourse of social justice and in terms of identity politics.

Each person is shaped by many intersectional parameters – for example by social status, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, age, spoken languages, and cultural background.

PostHeimat acknowledges that we are living in post-migrant societies.

PostHeimat aims to question the structural hierarchies of German theatre, to reduce discrimination and racism within theatre institutions as well as to shape their programmes and productions.

PostHeimat seeks to bring together and share information regarding intersectional trainings and workshops through an ongoing exchange.

PostHeimat is open to artists, producers, groups, theatre institutions and researchers to cooperate, to steadily enrich the network, and to connect with related initiatives.

<https://www.postheimat.com/about/>

2. Communication Group

Representatives displayed the layout proposed for the up-coming website, discussed the launch of the website and its platforms. The group also worked on a press release that would accompany the launch of the website. The content of the groups and the previous encounters was gathered and assembled into the website.

Website: www.postheimat.com

3. Research Group

The research group of the PostHeimat network met with several scholars from Göttingen, Berlin, Mülheim and a guest from Aarhus: Professor Peter M. Boenisch. It worked on a foundational text/manifesto that has since been published on the website of the network, called *Problematizing PostHeimat*. Furthermore, the group created content for the research section of the website, with an updated “About” section, photos, and a first post with a link to a PDF of the PostHeimat text. The group also created a short audio file that can be listened to on the website, for which it asked members of the network to talk about what Heimat means for them - and edited responses in three languages. Lastly, the group moved further the editing process of the book that will come out of the PostHeimat Network with Transcript publishing, and the convenor of the research group - Jonas Tinius - has been in contact to facilitate this process. Tinius also participated and moderated a panel discussion on the first morning of the encounter, and updated and translated various website profiles in German and English for the website.

The Website content: <https://www.postheimat.com/research-en/>

Research

Problematizing PostHeimat

Prompted by recurring nationalist appropriations of the term *Heimat* and its enduring colonial connotations in the German context, we felt the urge to re-open the notion, to trouble it collectively, to shift its meaning *beyond* singular interpretations. Beyond Heimat, in this case: PostHeimat, does not mean abandoning the possibility of connecting to the term, but going through it, across it, and to find other and new meanings that signal a pluralistic *re*-appropriation of the notion.

PostHeimat, then, is a departure point to reflect on concepts like identity-formation, nation, racism, and colonialism – and to move to an understanding of *home* that is non-discriminatory, does not equate nation with ethnicity or language, and deeply recognises a post-migrant social theory. PostHeimat becoming points towards an emergent and as of yet incomplete idea. It stands for a heterogeneous process that resists forming a new canon, a new *Leitkultur*. PostHeimat proposes itself more as a conversation, one that does not shy away from admitting less uttered experiences. In doing so, it seeks to form part of a critical social imagination, a new ethics for a diverse commons.

Theatre and the performing arts have long been a site and practice for imagining collectivity, sociality, dividuality, and the relation of individuals to society. It can be a mode of thinking and enacting identities in a queer, plural, and shifting way. It is constituted by and concerns relations between persons – between actors and actors, actors and audiences – but also functions by way of multiple further mediations - through and across bodies, languages, materials, and the sonic. We want to build on this potential and reality of theatre as a *collective practice to imagine Heimat post-Heimat*. Or, as Dwight Conquergood put it, theatre is a form of 'co-performative witnessing' that brings about and imagines collectivities otherwise.

PostHeimat proposes an *Umleitkultur* (detour culture) rather than a *Leitkultur*, in which Christianity, Whiteness, Masculinity are not guiding unmarked principles for social norms; but instead, we let ourselves be accompanied by a distracting, queer, non-normative culture. Accepting detours, rather than straight roads.

PostHeimat understands that the term *Heimat* played a significant role in the German colonial imagination and its racist ideologies (*Kolonie und Heimat*), and that it reverberates in the post-colonial present. As such, PostHeimat takes an anti-racist stance that grapples with the enduring neo-colonial heritage of this past.

Heimat comprises *Heim*, and is linked directly to ideas and practices of hospitality, of welcome, of giving refuge, and of making home. PostHeimat recognises the privileged and oftentimes asymmetrical, patronising, and even hostile character of guest-host relations. It seeks to reconsider *creating home* as a shared concern that prioritises the inalienable rights of safety and transnational citizenship over the not-quite logic of temporary asylum.

We advocate a move away from projecting migrants and refugees as 'to-be-integrated' members of a society, whose linguistic abilities, habits, and resources are regarded as 'lacking'; PostHeimat rethinks the concept of post-migrant citizenship not from the perspective of integration, lack, and hierarchy, but recognises plurality as potential, multiperspectivity as richness, and diversity as value.

Heimat has been mobilised to design public cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, and theatres, that instantiate the ties between culture, citizenship, and nation; and it has been preserved through such institutional traditions. PostHeimat recognises the ambivalent power of institutions to perform, represent, and institute visions of society; PostHeimat efforts problematise and enact a pluralising politics also within and through institutions without seeking to reproduce hegemonising institutional agency.

We recognise the performativity of discourse, and consider these reflections as a first iteration of a PostHeimat *Umleitkultur*.

Berlin, 8 March 2020

This statement was drafted by the research group of the PostHeimat network during and after Encounter #04 at the Maxim Gorki Theater in March 2020.

6. Feedbacks and Outlook

The encounter ended with a feedback and the presentation of content of the different groups. Aim was to finish the website and to finalize the press release. The general atmosphere was very positive. The working groups and public program were very successful in their overall endeavors. A next 'in-between meeting' will be discussed for June 2020. The idea of the meeting is to think about the future progress of the network and its working groups. Topics that will need to be addressed in the next meetings were discussed as follows:

- To think about public actions and work that happens in-between the encounters.
- The idea of stable funding and constant work methods, after the initial funding has ended in 2021.
- Are new working groups, members and artists needed?
- To think about the role of the artists within the network.
- Address the topic of Diversity Development Center.

The PostHeimat Encounter #4 programm is available here: <https://www.gorki.de/en/postheimat>

7. Next meeting Encounter #5

Dates: October 22nd – 25th October 2020

Location: Hamburg

Host: Hajusom

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