DOI: 10.1515/abcsj-2016-0018

An Empty Table and an Empty Boat: Empathic Encounters with Refugee Experiences in Intermedial Installation Art

JANNA HOUWEN
Leiden University

Abstract
This essay is an inquiry into two intermedial installations that address the experiences of people on the run from war or poverty, yet overtly hinder and problematize the viewer's identification with the depicted refugees. By doing so, *Friday Table* (2013) by art collective Foundland, and Isaac Julien's video installation *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) differ from the many contemporary discourses dealing with the so-called refugee crisis that suggest a blind assumption of empathy's benevolence. Taking theoretical texts concerning the relation between empathy, politics and the (lens-based) representation of refugees by, for instance, Slavoj Zizek (2016) and Jill Bennett (2005) as a starting point, I read *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* as reflections on the pitfalls as well as the critical political possibilities of empathy in contemporary debates on refugees. Moreover, I argue that the two lens-based installations in question are able to examine the limits of empathy and identification with refugees through their common denominator: intermediality. Both *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* combine lens-based media (photography, video and film) with non-lens-based medial forms such as drawings, graphs and calligraphy. As I will demonstrate, the interplay between different media is decisive when it comes to the way in which the three works of art produce, manage and reflect on the relation between spectators and depicted refugees.

Keywords*:* refugees, empathy, identification, political, intermediality, art

Introduction

"Look Through The Eyes of a Refugee." With this catch phrase printed on flyers and posters, a museum named The Humanity House in the Netherlands advertises for an exhibition titled *The Asylum Search Engine*.[i] In what the museum calls a cross-medial installation, the visitor is invited to step into the footsteps of an individual who is forced to leave her house and country for safety reasons. In addition to watching films, photographs and videos by several artists, the visitor can walk a route through dark corridors, boarded up doors and windows, containers and models of border-crossing points. Surrounded by sounds of panic, photographs of war and destruction, as well as video testimonies of actual refugees, the visitor is – according to the museum – enabled to experience "what it must feel like to have to survive in an area that is affected by disaster or conflict."

This invitation to empathy (derived from the Greek *empatheia*, an assimilated form of *en* "in" and *pathos* "feeling") is not unique. *The Asylum Search Machine* is an unequivocal example of a wider tendency in current artistic media practices. Many contemporary works of visual art that deal with the theme of forced migration produce specific empathic relations between Western viewers and non-Western refugees.[ii] This tendency can be seen in light of the so-called refugee crisis. For, as the website of the Humanity House explains, it is pivotal today to project oneself in the position of others, as the approach of unknown others has led to over-simplified views on refugees: "The refugee crisis has deeply divided Europe. … There is little nuance in the heated debates. Asylum seekers are either unwelcome parasites who feed on our wealth or pitiful figures deserving of our compassion." With *The Asylum Search Engine,* the Humanity House wishes to address the refugee crisis by asking the museum visitor: "How do you relate to these people? What responsibilities do you, as a Dutch citizen, have for our policies?"[iii] By feeling what refugees feel in both emotional and physical respects, by identifying with people "who seem to come from a different world; a place of war, violence and poverty," visitors might meet the museum's

general premise, which is "to increase understanding, to inspire people to contribute positively to a life of peace and freedom for everybody."

It is hard to argue against the noble aims of the museum (who would refute a life of peace and freedom for everybody?), nor can the observation on Europe's division over the refugee crisis be denied.[iv] However, the effectivity of the exhibition should be questioned. The route that is supposed to mimic a flight over borders from danger to safety is nothing more than an artificial décor in which the visitor can safely follow red arrows on the floor from start to finish. At no point does the installation succeed in provoking feelings in the visitor that one might associate with forced migration, such as fear and feelings of loss. Nor does the installation raise some of the experiential categories that T.J. Demos has aptly associated with the refugee, such as spatial insecurity, perceptual disorientation, bodily uncertainty and reality's substitution by reverie's wonder (73, 83). Instead of allowing the viewer to feel like a refugee, it rather installs feelings of distance and detachment by demonstrating how large the experiential gap is between a citizen living in a safe area and an asylum seeker or a migrant undertaking a dangerous journey to Europe. In addition, the installation does not escape from the cliché it wishes to refute: the exhibited photographs and video interviews *do* paint a picture of pitiful victims in need of compassion and help from the West. Shown on small screens in suitcases, with the rules of international humanitarian law on a juxtaposed wall, the filmed subjects look like oblivious objects that need protection and education.

In spite of, or perhaps precisely *because of* the fact that *The Asylum Search Machine* does not meet the aims that are so explicitly set forth on the museum's website, the installation is able to point out that creating an empathic relation between viewers and refugees by way of artistic representation can be problematic, as distance and objectification are easily reinforced instead of obliterated. In addition, *The Asylum Search Machine* raises questions as to the political relevance of empathy in the current refugee crisis. Does empathy lead as unidirectional to understanding and peace as the promotional texts of the Humanity House suggest? And to what extent is the understanding that might be brought about a *political* form of understanding? (At what point) can placing

oneself in someone else's shoes lead to a critical reflection on national or international politics? When are artistic representations of refugees able to incorporate each viewer's individual experience of looking/feeling from a new perspective into a wider political context in which power relations are deliberated and analyzed? In this essay, I will bring these questions to bear on two lens-based works of art in which forced migration is a dominant theme: a photographic installation titled *Friday Table* (2013) by art collective Foundland and Isaac Julien's video installation *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010).[v]

These two works of art are in a way the opposite of the promotional texts on *The Asylum Search Machine* that promise full access to the experience of refugees. For although the two installations, like *The Asylum Search Machine*, address the experiences of people on the run from war or poverty, they hinder and problematize rather than invite to identification with refugees. This is not to say that *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* do not construct a relation between their viewers and the represented subjects. However, instead of suggesting a blind assumption of empathy's benevolence, the two works of art I will discuss can be read as critical reflections on the possibilities and pitfalls of empathy in contemporary debates on refugees.

Moreover, I argue that the two lens-based installations in question are able to examine the limits of empathy and identification with refugees through their common denominator: intermediality. Both *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* combine lens-based media (photography, video and film) with non-lens-based medial forms such as drawings, graphs and computer generated images. As I will demonstrate, the interplay between different media is decisive when it comes to the way in which the three works of art produce, manage and reflect on the relation between spectators and depicted refugees. In order to examine how the intermedial strategies of *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* affect the audience, it is first necessary to take a look at some of the theoretical debates concerning the relation between empathy, politics and the (lens-based) representation of refugees.

1. Theoretical Perspectives on Empathy

Overpowering and Crude Empathy

According to political theorist Slavoj Žižek, recent "appeals to our empathy towards the poor refugees flowing to Europe are not enough" (8). In his book *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours* (2016), Žižek argues that our (European) response to the refugee crisis offers two versions of what he calls ideological blackmail: either we try to pull up the drawbridge, or we open our doors as widely as possible. Both solutions are bad, Žižek claims, yet the theorist particularly criticizes the "hypocrites" who advocate open borders: "secretly, they know very well this will never happen" (8). Playing the Beautiful Soul by displaying altruistic virtues and pleading for humanitarian help does not lead to large-scale solutions (99-100). By referring to Oscar Wilde's lines that "it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought" (8), Žižek suggests that when it comes to the refugee crisis, feeling bad for the people at Europe's borders is insufficient: we need to think about what has to be done. Our proper aim "should be to try and reconstruct a global society on such a basis that desperate refugees will no longer be forced to wander around" (Žižek 9). First of all, in order to reconstruct such a global society, , an analysis of the current one is needed. In *Against the Double Blackmail,* Žižek therefore critically addresses a variety of political issues that are related to causes of the current refugee crisis and explain the flow to Europe, such as the dynamics of global capitalism, economic neo-colonialism, the rise of a new slavery and the possibility that we are approaching a new era of apartheid in which a privileged "Inside" excludes and oppresses those left vulnerable outside (6).

Notwithstanding the thought-provoking qualities of Žižek's polemical political analyses, on which much more can be said, it is mainly his dismissal of empathy as "not enough" that needs expounding in the context of this essay. This will be done by adding two possible stances towards empathy to Žižek's theory. Firstly, it is possible to argue that in the current refugee crisis empathy is not merely inadequate (not enough); it is often overpowering as well, *too much.* Secondly, I will argue that

besides being not enough, or too much, empathy can at times serve as (a stepping stone to) critical political thought and/or intervention.

The overpowering form of empathy is related to the fact that refugees are hypervisible today. Although many have travelled the routes to “Fort Europe” over the last decades, the dangers and dramas that mark forced migration to Europe have been invisible for a long time. Only recently, dramatic images of suffering, huddling masses of migrants crossing the ocean in overcrowded ramshackle boats, landing on the shores of Europe, increasingly inhabit our television screens and newspaper pages (Vium 217). As Christian Vium puts it well: “Stripped of their history, these migrants become visible to us only at the height of their suffering: undifferentiated, shipwrecked souls with glearing white eyes, exhausted [or deceased, we might add] by dehydration and days spent at sea” (217). Although it is to be expected that a growing familiarity with the many pictures of suffering refugees will eventually lead to numbness – as also claimed, for instance, by Susan Sontag (20) with respect to photographs of the Holocaust – and hence a blocking of empathy, recent media coverages of the refugee crisis were not received with apathy. Especially the horrific images of drowned children and consequential photographs and videos of parental grief produced strong emotional responses in many European viewers.

However, these explicit images of suffering and death tend to foster emotional identifications and promote what Bertolt Brecht called “crude empathy,” defined as the tendency to abstract from the specifics of the life depicted and identify with a single emotion or affect; to respond by thinking “I wonder what it would be like if that happened to me” (Brecht qtd. in Bennett 111). This crude empathy is similar to a form of identification that Kaja Silverman termed *idiopathic* identification: identification on the basis of a (projected) likeness. In a slightly “cannibalistic” process, the other is taken into the self. Features of the other that are similar to the self are enhanced in the process, while features that remain irreducibly other are cast aside or ignored. As a result, the other “becomes” or “becomes like” the self. Hence, this form of identification, which Silverman terms *idiopathic*, relies on seeing the other as similar to the self.

In *Empathic Vision* (2005), Jill Bennett aptly points out the problematic nature of crude empathy: "What is wrong with this kind of empathy is, of course, that another's experience … is assimilated to the self in the most simplistic and sentimental way; anything the audience's immediate experience remains beyond comprehension" (111). Bennett refers to Geoffrey Hartman here, who has identified this problematic as central to the empathetic relationship as it arises between an audience and victims who give testimony: "the pathos of the testimonial moment loses its specific context precisely because it arouses a widespread anxiety." In overidentifying with those who testify, we fail "to respect the difference between their suffering and our own" (Hartman qtd. in Bennett 111).

The fact that contemporary representations of refugees, either in testimonial form or not, often stimulate rather than halt such assimilating forms of overidentification, can be explained by a prevailing humanitarian approach to refugees. As the afore discussed promotional texts on the website of the Humanity House also express, the act of imagining oneself into someone else's desperate situation is often seen as redemptive. Once we realize we are all the same, that we share the same fears and emotions, that we could be in the same boat, we can open our hearts and borders to the strangers who are just like us. Such an assumption does not merely fail to acknowledge the distinct nature of the suffering of refugees, and the extent to which it cannot be shared. It also fails to recognize the incommensurability of the political status of European citizens on the one hand, and nationless refugees in camps on the other. As Europeans, we are not in the same boat, and as Žižek remarks, "it would be extremely presumptuous to think so" (81). In this vein, the latter proposes to cut the link between refugees and humanitarian empathy, in which we ground our help to refugees in our compassion for their suffering. "We should," Žižek argues, "help them because it is our ethical duty to do so, …, but without the sentimentalism that breaks down the moment we realize that most of the refugees are *not* 'people like us'" (82). For Žižek, human universality is a universality of "strangers," of individuals reduced to impenetrability in relation to others and themselves (79).

Managed Empathy and Critical Thought Through Art

What Žižek overlooks in his dismissal of empathy and his insistence on a universality of strangeness, though, is the possibility of an empathic encounter that respects the impenetrability of the other's experience. In *Empathic Vision,* Bennett discusses a managed form of empathy, in which a spectator can *feel into* the body of another person, yet without indulging in identification, as the illusion of the representation (Bennett discusses a puppet-play on the TRC in South Africa) is constantly broken down (123). Bennett bases her idea of the empathic encounter on the face-to-face encounter in the sense evoked by Gayatri C. Spivak. Through encounters, the difference between the one who testifies and the one who listens – or between the one who is depicted and the one who is looking – is not necessarily eradicated, although it may be reduced; "it is, more precisely, inhabited" (Bennett 105). Via Spivak's idea of the encounter, Bennett points out a mode of empathic looking "that can support and tolerate difference rather than either repudiating it or assimilating the experience of the other to the self" (105).

This brings me to my second addition – or alternative – to Žižek's discussion of empathy in relation to the refugee crisis: the notion that empathy can at times lead to or serve as a political act and/or analysis. Whereas emotionalism and sentimental identification have been ruled out as viable political responses, for instance, by Brecht and Arendt respectively, Bennett argues (following Deleuze) that affects – through art – may take us toward a form of critical thinking.[vi] Affective identifications, mediated through bodily perception, may induce empathy that leads to critical understanding. The managed form of empathy which some art works are able to produce undercuts rather than affirms the bounds of subjectivity, thereby taking us beyond ourselves, yet without taking us entirely into the place of the other or usurping the other into the self (Bennett 104, 123). Through art, this form of empathy rather allows us to inhabit the space – the difference – between ourselves and others.

This possibility is potentially political when we follow Chantal Mouffe's agonistic model of the political. Within this model of democratic politics, public spaces are a battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted without any possibility of final

reconciliation (Mouffe 10). Instead of inscribing pluralism and the ability to see things from other perspectives into a horizon of intersubjective agreement, as Arendt did, Mouffe insists on "the eradicability of antagonism, of what Lyotard refers to as the 'differend'" (10). Within agonistic political spaces, conflicts of interest and/or intersubjective differences are confronted (encountered, we might say) but not resolved. Empathy is related to this agonistic model of the political – albeit implicitly – by Anthony Clohesy who claims in *Politics of Empathy* that empathy is a necessary condition for democracy, because it gives us a sense of *difference*, a sense that there are other ways of being in the world. It allows us to see how we have denied the singularity of those we now recognize (3).[vii] In sum, works of art that produce empathic encounters in which differences between self and others are acknowledged, seen and inhabited, can be understood as agonistic political spaces.

Problems of Representation: Layered Lenses and Bare Life

The idea of art works as political spaces that set up empathic encounters between viewers and represented subjects is problematic when it comes to lens-based representations of refugees. First of all, this has to do with what I would call the violating capacities of lens-based media. In the course of their histories, photography and film have been intertwined with colonial, anthropological and medical discourses. The two media were believed to serve as epistemological tools in these discourses, as neutral technologies capable of representing reality in an objective, transparent manner. However, as Rosalind Krauss has argued, the specificity of a medium lies in its technological support *plus* a layer of conventions (16). Although both the technological support and the heterogeneous set of conventions can change over time (making this a non-essentialist notion of medium specificity), the violent heritage of film and photography is to some extent still present in the conventions of both media.

Objectifying and appropriating representational forms deriving, for instance, from anthropometrical measuring and mapping "vacant" land still surface in applications of film and photography. This also goes for the conventions of early twentieth-century documentary photography and film that centered on the poor social classes. As Brian Winston has

convincingly demonstrated, these representations re-victimized their subjects by presenting them as objects without any agency (273). In addition to this, feminist film scholars, such as Laura Mulvey, have exposed how the application of film in the domain of narrative cinema has led to another set of harmful conventions: montage sequences which produce an objectifying gaze. Through a succession of shots and reverse shots of looking and looked-at characters, classical fiction films tend to suture images of female characters to the gaze of male protagonists, who look at women as objects of desire. The medium of video, finally, is often described as a cold, objectifying medium. Grainy images in low resolution, shot from a static high angle, are associated with the controlling gaze of the surveillance camera.[viii] Thus, power is exercised by medial conventions. In the case of the representation of refugees, this could aggravate the already asymmetrical power relations between viewers and refugees and turn an encounter between them from an intersubjective to an objectifying meeting.

Secondly, the formation of an artistic political space in which European viewers encounter refugees is challenging due to the political status of refugees. In his essay "Beyond Human Rights" (1996), Giorgio Agamben has made the well-known declaration that the refugee presents the very instantiation of naked life, of bare life stripped of political inscription insofar as the refugee exists outside of the nation state.[ix] For Agamben (1996, 1998), the (highly generalized) figure of the refugee is an important figure of our political history: through the figure of the refugee, we may countenance new ways of political belonging and political community in the future. New ways, that is, beyond the sovereign nation.[x]

It is, however, challenging to envisage the arrival of such new ways of political belonging for refugees who currently live a bare life as non-citizens without rights. As TJ Demos puts it: "The figure of the refugee, when regarded as the point for departure for the conception of a new postnational subject, demands an answer to the question of rights 'beyond human rights,' which have proved inextricably linked to the nation state an thus inescapable of bearing meaningful relation to those who live outside of it" (74). When it comes to the formation of a new political

community (or merely demanding an answer to the exclusion from rights), the rightlessness of refugees stands in the way. This is why Peter Nyers points out that the activism of the refugee represents an "impossible activism" precisely because the refugee is not a political subject (they are non-citizens) and have *no right* to a speaking position (Nyers 1080).[xi] The same could be said on the idea of art as an agonistic political space: how to include subjects into such a space who cannot be represented politically, who do not have a political voice? In the years after Agamben published his influential essay, many theorists have searched for modes and moments by which political agency can nevertheless be carved out for refugees, and ways in which refugees can still be thought of as part of (political) communities.[xii] The two works of art I will discuss below are involved in the same search.

2. *Friday Table*: An Empathic Encounter with Absence

In the middle of a room, a long wooden table is covered with a white table-cloth. The table is set, so it seems, with plates. Yet, when approaching *Friday Table* in the gallery room, most of the plates turn out to be only outlines of plates, dotted circles indicating dinner service. Within each circle, a name is printed in a bold black font. Smaller texts printed on the table cloth provide information with each of the plates: name, date and place of birth, and next of kin. Dina, for instance, was born in 1988 in Damascus, is single, the daughter of Souma and sister of Ahmad. Lana, across the table, is married to Ahmad. She is a mother of two children whose names (Jad and Yara) are printed in the two smallest circles on the table. Even though only first names are given, we can presume that these people share a family name, as all of the 17 persons named and described turn out to be related by kinship.[xiii] These kinship ties are confirmed all the more by the fact that family photographs are projected on the table, over the plates and texts, covering the cloth with yet another layer of information, a layer that binds the family members by projecting a string of family events on the white linen, weddings, birthday parties, family trips and holidays. In between the plates, moreover, a graphic pattern of lines connects many of the plates on the table to larger

dots in the middle. In combination with the texts and photographs, it is not unreasonable to assume that these lines indicate a family tree.

However, instead of representing the bonds of kinship that tie a family together, the branched maze of lines points out the dispersion of a family. With the exception of Grandma Salma, who was born in Belgrade, all family members were born in Damascus, Syria. However, the graphs on the table reveal that most of them have left. While Ghalia already emigrated in 1999, most family members departed after the Arab Spring protests that marked the beginning of the Syrian Civil War. The dots and lines on the table turn out to be a map of flight routes, from Damascus to Zatari Refugee Camp in Jordan, to Cairo, Dubai, or Abu Dhabi. Most lines come together on the left side of the table, where the names of European cities are printed next to a group of black dots: Aachen, Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam. Viewers of the installation can read the current location of all family members on the table cloth. Most of them have arrived in a city or refugee camp outside of Syria, yet some of them are missing. In addition, two of them have been arrested, and two of the grandparents are deceased. Only Mazen, Dunia and Souma are still living in Damascus today, according to the texts on the table cloth. Their names are the only ones that are printed onto real porcelain plates instead of dotted circles. Yet in spite of the fact that the location of these three family members is Damascus, they are –like all the other family members – absent from the dinner table.

The fact that the installation is titled *Friday* table is meaningful in this regard. Although the religion of the family is not mentioned, this particular day of the week has specific connotations in both Christianity and Islam. In combination with a dinner table, “Friday” brings the Passion of Christ to mind. The last supper took place on a Thursday. On Friday – the day of calvary and execution – the table was empty, like in Foundland’s installation. “Good Friday” is a day of mourning.[xiv] In Islam, Friday is regarded as an important day of the week on which it is common to read Chapter 18 from the *Qur’an* in congregational prayer. This chapter is titled “The Cave” (“Al-Kahf”), and narrates the story of a couple of youngsters who fled to a cave in the mountains to escape persecution.

In spite of these references to flight and dispersion, the visitor of *Friday Table* is not invited to empathize with the fate of the family members in a direct, sentimental manner. As viewers, we do not get to know the precise stories of Lana, Yassin, or Grandma Insaf; we do not learn why Hani was arrested or how Latifa is doing in the refugee camp. The texts inform us how the family members got to their current location: modes of transportation are neatly listed on the table cloth. Yet apart from our general knowledge of the Syrian war, we do not know why they fled, or what horrors they endured as refugees. The suffering, persecution and loss that is suggested by the title of the piece is not affirmed by characters displaying the fear, sadness and mourning one might expect. Although the family pictures presumably show us the faces of the family members, we cannot attach the individual faces to any of the names, nor do they reveal any of the emotions we would associate with fleeing from war. Emotional identification with the represented family members is therefore obstructed. Crude empathy with the 14 refugees named on the table cloth is not enabled by this work of art, as there are simply no emotions on display that the viewer could "assimilate to the self in the most sentimental way" (Bennett 111).

Nevertheless, the installation produces an empathic encounter in an intricate manner. It does not so much allow the spectator to "meet" or come closer to the (cultural, migratory) other, or to inhabit the space between self and other, as Bennett defined her managed form of empathy. *Friday Table* rather arranges for the viewer to encounter the *absence* of the other: the not-being-there of the refugees. The maps on the table indicate both spatial and temporal movement away from the table; most of the family members fled from the city of Damascus where the Friday dinner table was set in the past. Their bodies have been reduced to crucifixes, dots and question marks on the table cloth, indicating their decease, presumed relocation elsewhere or unknown whereabouts.

However, although the family members are thus still signified by the graphs on the table, at the same time, these marks make clear that the family is *not* present at the table anymore. In addition, the physical absence of the family members is all the more emphasized by the fact that most of the objects we need in order to have dinner at a table are absent as

well; not only are most of the plates missing, there is no cutlery and the chairs are missing too. The visitor of *Friday Table* can physically move into the places where family members used to sit down in the past. While standing in front of the circles that outline the past position of people's dinner plates, the spectator becomes a temporary stand-in for those who have left, not by identifying with characters, or by feeling into the bodies of these other persons, but by standing in their voids. This does not imply that the spectator is enabled to fully empathize with those who fled. Rather, the difference between self and other can be felt through this negative representation of refugees: the difference between, on the one hand, the viewer who is present in the here and now, standing at a table that was once surrounded by a large family, and, on the other hand, the family members who were seated together in the past but had to move away, leaving lacunae at a shared table. Insofar as the space between self and other is inhabited (as Bennett would have it), this space can only be envisaged negatively, as a hole left by an absent other, as a gap between then and now, neither of which can be filled or bridged by the presence of the spectator.

With regards to this process in which becoming a stand-in produces an affective encounter with the absence of the refugees that *Friday Table* refers to, it is important that the visitor of the installation cannot sit down. Standing in for the family members is restrained as the viewer can quite literally only *stand* in for them. The installation allows its audience to occupy empty spaces at the dinner table, yet it hinders a too close imitation of a family dinner. This way, the installation keeps the spectator from indulging in overidentification with the family members. The viewer can experience that they are not there anymore but is not enabled to assimilate their experiences to the self.

That's Me / That Has Been / They Have Left

The intermedial character of the installation further sustains *Friday Table's* restraint on identification. The medium of photography draws the viewer into the familial structure, yet only up to a certain point. The family pictures projected on the table cloth invite to idiopathic identification at first. They show well-known family gatherings, as well as

familiar emotions: parties and holidays, smiles and the occasional awkward face. For most viewers, it is not difficult to relate to the depicted situations or to empathize with the people on display. As the pictures follow the conventions of family photography so closely, we can presume that they resemble the family albums of many spectators, as well as their memories shaped by these albums. Therefore, the photographed others can, to a certain extent, be assimilated to the self in a simplistic way, on the basis of a projected likeness: we are the same, that is (like) me.

The appropriating or "cannibalistic" edge of this form of crude empathy, as Bennett would call it, has an upside when it comes to *Friday Table*. Given the fact that Foundland's piece has exclusively been exhibited in Western countries (Europe and the USA), the series of photographs of a Syrian family could possibly give rise to a detached investigative gaze, searching for difference. Some of the formal conventions of the family photographs, such as the group portraits in which large numbers of people are lined up in front of the lens, are reminiscent of early twentieth-century anthropological projects in which cultural others were captured with the camera, in order to map, archive, measure and research essentially different "primitive peoples." The family that is shown on the installation's table cloth, however, cannot easily be regarded as an object of study by Western viewers as the represented subjects can hardly be recognized as non-Western cultural others. The looks, clothing, activities and poses shown by the photographs do not form an archive of Oriental otherness for European or American viewers, but rather provide an already familiar overview of outdated fashion styles in faded colors. Hence, the appropriating empathy that springs from likeness overthrows another form of appropriation when looking at *Friday Table*: an objectifying, scrutinizing mode of looking.

The viewer of the installation is further woven into the family by way of looks as well as touch. In *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsh wonders how the impenetrable façade of family photographs can be entered. How can viewers who stand outside the familial network access or read the domestic space on family pictures? (2, 4). According to Hirsh, familial subjectivity is constructed relationally, and one manner in which the

individual subject is constituted in the space of the family is through looking, by looking at family members and being looked at in return (9). As Hirsh explains, “these constitutive optical relations are often concealed and unacknowledged. We have no easy access to these nonverbal exchanges which nevertheless shape and reshape who we are” (9). However, as the author in question demonstrates in her book, family photographs *might* give insight into a family’s dynamics or psychological layers when we read domestic images and family photographs as records of these processes.

In her analyses, Hirsh emphasizes that the viewer/reader of family photographs does not remain a detached outsider when reading family pictures. Inside the frame, family members are related by way of interfamilial looks as well as by touch: connections are, for instance, made visible by holding hands, standing shoulder to shoulder or sitting on laps. However, the viewer outside the frame becomes part of these familial exchanges. First of all, the viewer is not only looking but is also looked at by the depicted people, as one of the dominant posing conventions of family photographs is that the subjects in front of the camera look into the lens, to the photographer and to viewers in the future. In addition, it is possible to argue that viewers are physically touched by photographed family members. For the photo is, in Roland Barthes’s terms, a carnal medium, connecting all those who look at it with the living person who stood in front of the camera in the past: “From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photographs of the missing being will touch me like the delayed rays of a star” (81).

On the one hand, *Friday Table* enhances the impression of being touched by rays of light that proceed from the represented subjects, as the projected photographs in the installation are made of light that visibly reflects from the table onto the face of the spectator. On the other hand, the closeness that is produced by what we could call a carnal indexical relation between viewer and represented family members is curbed by the fact that the people in these pictures are so blatantly missing. This missing could be said to be a part of every photograph. For Barthes, the essence of photography, its *noeme*, is the “That-has-been.” Whatever is shown on a

photograph belongs irrevocably to the past. In *Friday Table*, the that-has-been of the photographs is made all the more poignant as the other parts of the installation (the graphs and maps as well as the set-up of the table without chairs) all point out the absence of the family members from a time *and* place where they have been together once.

In addition, the façades of the family pictures in the installation remain impenetrable as the pace of the projection limits viewing time. Each photograph is rapidly succeeded by the next, turning the represented family members into passers-by who disappear before the visitor can have a proper look at them. The ongoing movement of the photographs, as well as the holidays they show, mimic the patterns on the table that also indicate that this family is and always has been on the move. Without sufficient time to identify the passing projected family members and their kinship relations, let alone to read the interfamilial looks for clues on psychological layers and family narratives, the family's structure remains to a large extent inaccessible to the spectator. The pictures are not revealing, and there is no one around (the table anymore) to tell the stories. As a result, the installation confines the impressions of likeness and belonging it initially produces in its viewer. Crude empathy is remolded into a managed form of empathy. The spectator can identify with the depicted family through likeness, momentarily feel "with" them when seeing their happy moments or experience physical proximity when being touched by their looks or their photographic traces. Yet in the end, the installation excludes the spectator from the familial space. This confronts the viewer with the result of flight. She cannot be with or feel part of this familiar family, because they have left.

From Empathy to Empowerment

How does this contained or managed form of empathy lead to critical thinking or understanding of the refugee crisis? Is *Friday Table* able to carve out political agency for those who are not around to tell their stories, for the family members whom the viewer draws near but keeps missing? First of all, the graphs on the table can be seen as a documentation of flight routes from Syria. Together with the textual information on modes of transport, they provide unsentimental insight into how Syrians families

flee from their country. The causes for leaving are not shown or mentioned though, and the horror of war and of taking refuge are left out. The installation depicts the emptiness, the void that is left upon leaving, yet does not portray the mourning that may accompany this process of leaving behind. Because of this, the family members are not portrayed as victims. They cannot be empathized with on the basis of pity and sympathy.

This brings me to the second manner in which *Friday Table* can lead to critical thinking by managing empathy. The installation can be understood as a critical reflection on the dominant representation of refugees as helpless others. In *Friday Table,* taking flight is to a large extent represented as a choice. Some of the family members chose to stay, others have left. In addition to information on dates of departure and modes of transportation, each of the text frames accompanying the plates contains the caption “Plans to Leave.” Some of the family members do not have plans, others do. In any case, leaving is presented as a planned action, not a passive event the refugees suffer through without agency.

Therefore, *Friday Table* is in concord with theorists such as Dan Bousfield and Fiona Terry who argue that refugees are actors that make choices about mobility like everyone else (Bousfield 5). As Terry points out in her discussion of the Arabic term *mohajir*, flight can be seen as a positive experience of agency rather than an abject source of exclusion (76). As she points out: “A mohajir is a person who voluntarily takes exile and has severed ties with relatives and possessions, thus denoting courage for sacrificing comfort and family, rather than shame at taking flight” (76). Terry’s conceptualization of the mohajir is grounded in the idea that flight is an empowering tactic, rather than a disempowering expulsion. Although Foundland’s installation does represent flight as a positive experience, the family members are shown to have agency with regards to the matter of leaving.

This agency is further sustained by the fact that the installation points out the mobility of family members long before the civil war: Grandma Salma was born in Belgrade but moved from Yugoslavia to Syria, Chalia left for Cairo twelve years before the Arab Spring, and the projected family pictures and occasional postcard prove that the family

has travelled for decades. As Bousfield has argued, the fact that migration and mobility have in general taken place throughout history is often overlooked: "Rather than seeing it as the exception, it should be treated as a norm that emphasizes the mobility and agency of the one seeking refuge" (15). *Friday Table* suggests the same thing. The installation arranges an intimate encounter with the absence and dispersion of a family, yet the fact that something is left behind empty does not mean the family is lost altogether. The weekly family dinners have ended. However, as the family in question proves to have been mobile throughout time, family history is actively continued after, but more importantly, *through* taking flight.

3. *Ten Thousand Waves*: Moving Screens

Isaac Julien's nine-screen video installation *Ten Thousand Waves* interweaves several media as well as several stories. The main story concerns 23 Chinese immigrants, who drowned in 2004 while working as clandestine cockle-fishers because they were unfamiliar with the rapidly rising tides in Morecambe Bay near Lancaster, UK. However, although this tragedy is central to the meaning and affect of the installation, it is not expounded on. It is told in a short and sober manner, by way of archival video footage of the rescue operation that is projected onto nine large screens that form an oval, with two screens placed in the middle. As a consequence, the viewer of the installation is surrounded by nine stretches of moving, foaming water which can never be seen all at once. While the police officers report from their helicopter how they can only recover one person, and while the camera on a rescue boat keeps scanning the rolling waves, the spectator is spurred to move, to turn from screen to screen, in order to join the search in the dark blur of grainy water. The viewfinder of the video camera that focuses on possible signs of life indicates a frantic air-sea rescue, but also carries the association of the controlling gaze of night-vision surveillance cameras that are used on border patrols at sea. The objects of this gaze can therefore be understood both as victims in distress and as unwanted intruders. Later on in *Ten Thousand Waves,* handheld images of Morecambe Bay by daylight show deserted sandbanks

and vast expanses of water. Like the rescue boat, the beach remains empty. The cockle-fishers are nowhere to be found. Moreover, their names, personal histories, voices and emotions are not revealed by the installation.

The Morecambe bay tragedy is embedded into two other stories. The first one is a Chinese myth about the goddess Mazu, who saves drowning, shipwrecked fishermen and escorts them to a beautiful, pristine Chinese island. The medium by which *Ten Thousand Waves* re-tells this age-old myth, however, is not as old as the "Tale of Yishan Island" itself. The installation narrates the story of Mazu through *cinematic* means: by way of high resolution moving images, as well as narrative film conventions. Secondly, *Ten Thousand Waves* imitates parts of the classic Chinese movie *The Goddess* (Yonggang 1934), which tells the story of an unnamed prostitute who walks the streets at night in order to provide for her son. The latter narrative seems far removed from the theme of drowning refugees from China in front of the British coast, yet it is in fact key in shaping the relation between the viewer and the represented refugees, as well as between Chinese refugees and a broader historical, economic and social Chinese context that is at the root of flight from China to the West. I will therefore turn to this story first.

Blocked Views, Excluded Viewers

The story of *The Goddess* is copied only partially by Julien's installation. In Yonggang's film, the prostitute falls prey to an evil male gambler, who first helps her to hide from the police, but then considers her to be his property. *Ten Thousand Waves* most comprehensively mimics scenes from *The Goddess* in which the prostitute is walking the streets at night, and travels through the old city during the day. In *Ten Thousand Waves,* however, these scenes are not embedded in a story about blackmail and murder. The woman isn't robbed, chased, laughed at or scolded in Julien's installation. She is looked at though. As a prostitute, she is gazed upon – visually inspected, so to speak – by male passers-by who occasionally pick her up. These male gazes can be witnessed within the frame, when the prostitute is shown with men in a single shot. However, she also becomes the object of the male gaze through the cinematic procedure of

suture. Although *Ten Thousand Waves* uses this cinematic narrative form of the shot/reverse angle shot in order to create so-called eye line matches that bind images of the female character to shots of the looking men, the installation seems to protect the female protagonist from an objectifying gaze in two ways.

First, the sutures between shots and reverse shots are not tight in *Ten Thousand Waves.* Like many cinematic video installations, *Ten Thousand Waves* sutures images spatially instead of temporally. The videomatic set-up of the multi-screen installation offers artists and filmmakers the possibility to attach the look of characters to opposing screens. Instead of being stitched to a temporally preceding or succeeding shot on the same screen, their gaze is sutured to another screen; the screen they seem to be looking at in the exhibition space. When the technique is employed in relation to the prostitute, however, the male gazes that rest upon her seem to "misfire." Because the match between their gaze and the female protagonist depends both on the position of the spectator in front of the screens, as well as on the precise angle between screens, the men in *Ten Thousand Waves* often seem to look slightly *past* instead of *at* the prostitute when they do not reside in the same frame. These "missutures" not only protect the prostitute from the male gazes within the diegesis; they also disable the installation's viewer from looking at her as an object of desire. As sutures forcefully invite film viewers to share the looking character's point of view, the visitors of *Ten Thousand Waves* will look past the prostitute if they adopt the gaze of her male onlookers. In this respect, the installation hinders the viewer.

Ten Thousand Waves blocks an appropriating look in yet another way. Although the prostitute mostly appears in bright, sharp and smooth cinematic looking images of a high quality, they are occasionally drastically out of focus. The result of the blurred opaqueness is that the female protagonist is hardly visible anymore. Whereas the projected images first invite the viewer to plunge visually into the depth of the illusionistic spaces on screen, they cast the viewer out as soon as the images are out of focus. The depicted prostitute can no longer be mastered or appropriated with the eyes. This is not only relevant in relation to the male gaze; it is also a significant strategy when it comes to the occidental

gaze. With the exception of one show in Shanghai, *Ten Thousand Ways* has been exhibited in Western countries alone. The resulting Western point of view holds the risk of being orientalist in the contemplation of Julien's installation which, very basically, is "about" China – or, to put it slightly less narrowly: about China's social, political, and economic history and the resulting Chinese migration to the West. The haptic, opaque image surface disables the Western viewer from visually obtaining the oriental other.

However, the opacification of the screen has a paradoxical dimension. On the one hand, the screen protects the female protagonist by problematizing visual access to her. On the other hand, the impenetrable screen reinforces that category of the "other." It sets up a boundary between the presumably occidental viewer and the oriental other on screen. This exclusion of the occidental viewer, and inclusion of the oriental subject, is established through a couple of other features of *Ten Thousand Waves.* First of all, the reference to the Chinese film classic in itself creates insiders and outsiders. For many Chinese film viewers, the reference will be obvious. *The Goddess* was a very popular movie, and has recently received new critical attention and acclaim in China as a valuable social document that exposes problems of the impoverished working class in early twentieth-century China. For Western viewers, Yonggang's film is less likely to be a part of their cultural frame of reference. Therefore, they might completely miss the installation's resemblance to *The Goddess.*

The occidental viewer who does not recognize the imitation of the film classic will, however, nevertheless feel excluded from and by the story of the unnamed prostitute because her Mandarin monologues are not subtitled. In addition to the woman's speech, the installation shows many close-ups of Chinese characters which are unintelligible to most members of an occidental audience. Notably, some of them are written on the surface of the screen by a Chinese calligrapher. The large sweeps of ink drip down on what now seems to function as a besmeared window between the exhibition space in which the viewer resides and the represented on-screen space in which the calligrapher is painting his human-sized signs. Like the opaqueness of the blurred images, these large

written ideograms instill a cleavage between the viewer and the "foreigner." Only now, the boundary is produced by a presumably illegible sign, a sign of alterity itself.

Travelling along, to the Present

In spite of these modes of excluding the occidental spectator, the viewer is also included into the onscreen world by sequences showing the prostitute and is led to the contemporary story of the drowned refugees. The blurred and smeared boundaries which *Ten Thousand Waves* occasionally creates between the space of the beholder and the illusionistic space on screen are not permanent. The represented space on the screens fuses with, or expands into, the space between the screens. One of the most poignant examples of this occurs in a scene in which the unnamed prostitute travels through the old city by tram. Whereas the carriage would have to be mapped out by successive shots and reverse shots in a conventional single screen movie, *Ten Thousand Waves* forms the interior of a tram by way of several, simultaneously projected images in the exhibition space. Six of the installation's screens roughly form a rectangle which resembles a tram in both size and shape. Each screen, then, shows a part of the tram: at the front, we see how the tram driver navigates the streetcar through traffic, while the screen at the back of the rectangle shows how the buildings and people in the streets disappear in the distance as the tram continues on its way through town. On the screens which form the sides of the tram, passengers sit on their benches. Although the female protagonist seems to sit alternately on each side of the tram, we see how she travels through the city while powdering her nose or staring out of the window. Her staring gaze is never sutured in the installation. Therefore, as a viewer, you cannot adopt her point of view. In this sense, the depicted woman remains an inaccessible other: viewers are not invited to identify with her. However, the visitor of *Ten Thousand Wave*s occasionally invited into her world, as the installation offers its viewer the impression of traveling along with her, in the tramcar, through town, but also through time.

As the installation suggests, the unnamed prostitute appears to move forward through time. First, she seems to belong to the 1930s. However, as she rides the tram through the old-looking city, the cityscape

is suddenly exposed as a film set. The architectural surroundings of the prostitute/actress turn highly modern as her storyline in *Ten Thousand Waves* progresses. She is depicted in what seems to be the contemporary interior of a high-class restaurant or luxurious hotel lobby. In addition, we see her staring out of the window of a hotel room, which offers a magnificent view over Pudong's skyscrapers. Here, the staring gaze of the woman attaches her to another story – precisely because the gaze itself hardly ever attaches itself to anything. The prostitute (or actress) keeps staring into the distance as if she were longingly thinking of someone who is not there. So who is she thinking of?

In *The Goddess,* the prostitute was separated from her son. Given the installation's initial resemblances with this early film classic, it seems obvious to suspect that the sad female protagonist might be missing her son. The installation confirms this presumption when shots of the staring actress/prostitute in the modern interior are alternated with shots from a video documentary on the Morecambe Bay victims. These show how an older family member, presumably a parent, of one of the drowned immigrants lays out some of the victim's personal belongings on a blanket and folds up some clothes of the deceased relative. Whereas the conventional documentary from which these images are sampled focused more on depicting the emotions and background of this relative, the installation merely shows a video image of two hands holding a photograph of one of the drowned young men. Although the photograph is clearly not held by the prostitute, the fact that her image is juxtaposed with this shot strongly implies that she is missing a son, too. However, the fact that the picture of the drowned man is shown by way of video embeds the "that-has-been" of the photograph into the "now" of what Thomas Y. Levin has termed video's temporal indexicality: through their possible liveness, video images always point to the present (583). In addition, the reality effect of the video documentary images further questions the presumed fictionality of the prostitute's cinematic story. This photographed man is really dead, right now. And the character of the prostitute is related to the reality of this moment in the present.

This presentness is further sustained when images of the female protagonist are mixed with video footage that has an even stronger

temporal indexicality: surveillance video footage of the rescue operation at Morecambe Bay. The genre of surveillance video is strongly associated with live feed. When images of the prostitute are mixed with these images (including the audio recording of a panicking woman begging for help), the story of the female character can no longer be seen apart from present tragedies involving Chinese refugees. While the nine screens of the installation are filled with images of traffic circling on an incredibly complex cloverleaf between high rises, a staccato female voice rapidly recites one of the poems Chinese poet Wang Ping contributed to Julien's piece:

> We know the tolls: 23 – Rochaway, NY; 58 – Dover, England;
> 18 – Shenzen; 25 – South Korea and many more.
>
> We know the methods: walk, swim, fly, metal container,
> back of a lorry, ship's hold.
>
> We know how they died: starved, raped, dehydrated, drowned, suffocated,
> homesick, heartsick, worked to death, working to death.
>
> We know we may end up in the same boat.

In the Same Boat

By creating a relationship between Yonggang's film classic and migratory tragedies which are pointed out by poems like this one, as well as by contemporary video footage of the Morecambe Bay tragedy, *Ten Thousand Waves* seems to suggest that the problems of China's working class are not new. In the 1930s, poverty ripped families apart as it (for instance) forced mothers to prostitute themselves and distance themselves from their children. In the twenty-first century, after the Cultural Revolution, family members risk their lives trying to cross the ocean in order to escape the poor living situation under China's authoritarian capitalism – only to enter into poor circumstances again in the capitalist West. While pointing a finger at China's capitalism by accompanying shots of modern Chinese streets with a thundering voice declaring that "we live in a capitalist world," Julien's installation also points back in time even further when it comes to the problems of China's poor working class by relating the Morecambe Bay tragedy to the myth of Mazu. By

representing this myth on jeopardized fishermen in need of help, which dates back to centuries before the Ming dynasty, Julien's installation indicates that "working to death" (or at least nearly to death) has had a long history in China.

The political, historical and economic perspective that *Ten Thousand Waves* offers on Chinese (forced) migration to Western countries gains force in combination with a specific empathic mode of looking that is enabled by the installation. The low-resolution and hand-held video footage that signals the contemporariness of *Ten Thousand Waves*'s stories, also produces an embodied mode of viewing which shapes the way in which the spectator can relate to the Chinese refugees. Viewers do not get to know their names, to see their fear, or hear their individual stories. Crude empathy and sentimental identification are therefore discouraged. Yet, the installation enables a form of "feeling in" the refugee experience that is mediated through bodily affect. For when the nine screens of the installation are filled with rapidly moving grey video pixels and black surging waves, the viewer loses the ground under her feet. Without a horizon or recognizable point of orientation, the spectator of Julien's installation is likely to feel lost and disoriented in between the screens. Previously, I described how the piece does not enable its spectator to identify with the character of the prostitute through the conventional film strategy of suture, because her point of view is not made accessible or visible to the viewer. However, the viewer is occasionally offered the possibility of seemingly traveling along with her, to accompany her in the tram, for instance. The same goes for the video footage of the rescue operation. The high angle from which most of the surveillance images are recorded indicates that they do not represent the immigrants' point of view. However, their disorienting effect enables the viewer to share the experience of the immigrants to some extent. This goes for the particular Chinese men who were lost at sea in Morecambe Bay, but can also be understood in a more general sense; the experience of refugees is often described in terms of disorientation and being lost.

The installation's devices of exclusion can be regarded in this light as well. When the high-quality cinematic images in the installation occasionally opacify and turn haptic, this change from cinematic image

qualities to video-specific features excludes the viewer from the depicted world and puts up a boundary between the viewer and the represented other. This visual exclusion of the viewer from the world on view can in itself be understood as an act that makes the viewer more like the other: similar to migrants in a strange country, the viewer is not allowed to visually enter the onscreen world. This exclusion is, of course, strongest in the case of Western viewers, who are not only excluded by the impermeability of the videomatic image surface, but who are also left in the dark when it comes to the spoken and written Chinese signs. Moreover, in addition to the fact that the Mandarin language is incomprehensible to the Western spectator, the viewer may be unable to grasp the installation's culturally specific cinematic references. Precisely because the installation is so often unreadable and visually opaque, the viewer cannot forget her own position *as* a viewer standing between screens. As a result, the viewer will, to some extent, experience a few of the most dominant negative feelings that can accompany migration, yet without losing awareness of her own position in time and space, both on a small scale (the museum) and a larger cultural-political global scale (Europe, the West).

At the beginning of this essay, I contrasted *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* with *The Asylum Search Machine,* an installation that promises (yet fails to provide) full access to the refugee experience by leading the visitor through an artificial multi-medial décor that inadequately mimics the circumstances of taking flight. My analyses have demonstrated that *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* are not merely the opposite of *The Asylum Search Machine* because they hinder and problematize rather than invite to identification with refugees: it is precisely *by* obstructing and dosing empathy, by partially excluding the spectator from represented worlds and events, that *Friday Table* and *Ten Thousand Waves* manage to construct empathic encounters with refugee experiences. Encounters, that is, in which the depicted refugees cannot be appropriated or victimized by the onlooker, and in which the viewer is invited to reflect on her own cultural-political position vis-à-vis the represented human subjects who fled from their own homelands. Whereas Žižek declared the insufficiency of empathy in his call for a political

analysis of both the roots and routes of the current refugee flow to Europe, the installations by Foundland and Julien prove that such an analysis may very well be instigated by managed forms of empathy that acknowledge instead of obliterate differences, and that maintain a distance while approaching refugee experiences. Because of *Friday Table*'s intermedial set up, the viewer's presence cannot fill, but only meet, the voids left at an empty dinner table due to a family's flight abroad. And through *Ten Thousand Waves'*s specific intermedial combination of film and video features, we may briefly end up in the same boat as the depicted refugees, by being thrown out at the same time.

Notes:

[i] Humanity House Museum, the Hague, the Netherlands, April-December 2016.
[ii] See for instance the platform *Remapping Europe: A Remix Project Highlighting the Migrant's Perspective.* Comprising a website, books and an online database of film and media art, this project brings together many contemporary works of art that provide insight into the experiences of refugees and displaced people. See www.remappingeurope.com and *Remixing Europe – Migrants, Media, Representation, Imagery* (Paulissen et al. 2014).
[iii] www.humanityhouse.org.
[iv] While writing this article, the division of Europe came to mean more than political dissent between European nations or between political parties within those nations. After a referendum on Thursday, 23 June 2016, we learned that the UK will leave the European Union.
[v] Foundland Collective is an art, design and research collective, initiated in 2009 by Lauren Alexander and Ghalia Elsrakbi and based between Cairo and Amsterdam.
[vi] Because emotions are intensely subjective, in Arendt's view, they work to impose their singular perspective on politics, holding plurality hostage to the particularities of subjective experience (see Johannes Lang, "Hannah Arendt and the Political Dangers of Emotion," 2015).
[vii] With Bennett's differentiation between "crude empathy" and managed forms of empathic encounters in mind, we can of course add to Clohesy's remark that it is important to realize that empathy can acknowledge and tolerate but also overlook and assimilate differences.
[viii] For a more extensive discussion of the violent features of lens-based media, see *Film and Video Intermediality: The Question of Medium Specificity in Contemporary Moving Images* (Houwen, forthcoming with Bloomsbury, 2017).
[ix] I am partially following a paraphrase of Agamben from T.J. Demos (74).
[x] Agamben's view on the refugee as a valuable figure pointing beyond the sovereign nation is not reflected in dominant public discourses in Europe (most

notably those surrounding Brexit), in which the refugee figure has come to stand in opposition to national sovereignty.

[xi] As paraphrased by Nick Bousfield in “The Logic of Sovereignty and the Agency of the Refugee” (4).

[xii] Ideas on this matter range from propositions to fully embrace bare life in order to demonstrate the violence inflicted by state power (e.g. Pugliese 2002, Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004 following Agamben 1996) to calls for the repudiation of bare life and the formation of communities around resistance to injustice (Owens 2009, Bousfield 2005).

[xiii]In an interview with Nat Muller (2014), Foundland’s Lauren Alexander and Ghalia Elsrakbi explained that the names on the table in fact refer to family members of Elsrakbi. This is not revealed explicitly at the installation site itself. However, it is suggested by the fact that Elsrakbi’s first name is in one of the drawn plates.

[xiv] The German term for Good Friday is *Karfreitag*: Freitag for Friday, Kar from *kara*: “bewailing,” “mourning,” “grieving.”

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. “Beyond Human Rights.” *Radical Politics in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Ed. P. Virno and M. Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

- - -. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. New York: Viking Press, 1963.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida.* 1980. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 2000.

Bennett, Jill. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005.

Bousfield, Nick. “The Logic of Sovereignty and the Agency of the Refugee.” *York Centre for International and Security Studies Working Paper Series* 36 (2005): 1-14.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic.* Trans. John Willet. New York: Hill, 1964.

Clohesy, Anthony M. *Politics of Empathy: Ethics, Solidarity, Recognition.* London: Routledge, 2013.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Proust and Signs*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Braziller, 1972.

Demos, T.J. “Life Full of Holes.” *Grey Room* 24 (2006): 72-87.

Edkins, Jenny, and Véronique Pin-Fat. “Introduction: Life, Power, Resistance.” *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics.* Ed. Jenny Edkins, Véronique Pin-Fat, and Michael J. Shapiro. London: Routledge, 2004.

Hirsh, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997.

Krauss, Rosalind. *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames, 1999.

Lang, Johannes. "Hannah Arendt and the Political Dangers of Emotion." *Hannah Arendt Centre.* Feb. 2015. Web. 28 June 2016.

Levin, Thomas Y. "Rhetoric of the Temporal Index: Surveillant Narration and the Cinema of Real Time." *CTRL Space: The Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*. Ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 2002. 578-593.

Mouffe, Chantal. *On the Political*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Muller, Nat. "Visualizing Displacement: Foundland in Conversation with Nat Muller." *Ibraaz: Contemporary Visual Culture in North Africa and the Middle East,* Sept. 2014. Web. 29 July 2016.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*. London: Macmillan, 1989. 14-26.

Nyers, Peter. "Abject Cosmopolitanism: The Politics of Protection in the Antideportation Movement." *Third World Quarterly* 24.6 (2003): 1069-93.

Pugliese, Joseph. "Penal Asylum: Refugees, Ethics, Hospitality." *Borderlands* 1.1 (2002): n. pag. Web. 10 July 2016.

Paulissen, Vivian, et al. *Remixing Europe – Migrants, Media, Representation, Imagery.* Amsterdam: Doc Next Network, 2014.

Owens, Patricia. "Reclaiming 'Bare Life'?: Against Agamben on Refugees." *International Relations* 23.4 (2009): 567-582.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, 1977.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Threshold of the Visible World.* New York: Routledge, 1996.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Translator's Preface and Afterword to Mahasweta Devi, 'Imaginary Maps.'" *The Spivak Reader.* Ed. D. Landry and G. MacLean. New York: Routledge, 1996. 267-86.

Terry, Fiona. *Condemned to Repeat?: The Paradox of Humanitarian Action.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002.

Vium, Christian. "Icons of Becoming: Documenting Undocumented Migration from West Africa to Europe." *Cahiers d'Études africaines* LIV (2014): 217-240.

Winston, Brian. "The Tradition of the Victim in Griersonian Documentary." *New Challenges for Documentary.* Ed. A. Rosenthal. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988. 169-287.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours.* London: Penguin, 2016.