

# UC Berkeley

## TRANSIT

### Title

Foreword: Archival Engagement

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9gb79587>

### Journal

TRANSIT, 13(2)

### Author

Sun, Elizabeth

### Publication Date

2021

### DOI

10.5070/T713258817

### Copyright Information

Copyright 2021 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

# Foreword: Archival Engagement

## *TRANSIT* vol. 13, no.2

Dear Readers,

It is my privilege to present the **second issue** of the **thirteenth volume** of *TRANSIT* on Archival Engagement. This theme is inspired by an ongoing series titled “Archives of Migration: The Power of Fiction in Times of Fake News,” which began at UC Berkeley and UC Davis in spring 2021 in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic. “Archives of Migration” has since featured (Zoom) conversations with many of Germany’s most important contemporary writers, including Sharon Dodua Otoo, Yoko Tawada, and Ilija Trojanow. These writers, multilingual in their literary projects and transcultural in their socio-political reach, offer readers wide-ranging perspectives on the conditions of belonging in Germany and beyond. As Deniz Göktürk writes in her introduction to the “Poetic Archives of Migration” section of *TRANSIT* 13.1, this contemporary writer series gives readers “an opportunity to experience contemporary *literature in action* and to *think with writers* about questions of *truth and fiction*.” Indeed, literature has long served as a creative powerhouse that critically exposes the structures of our knowledge and memory, while offering alternative visions for our present and future.

This issue, like *TRANSIT*’s 2021 digital publication of *Your Homeland is Our Nightmare*, is an artistic and critical response to our “era of imperiled democracy,” as Jon Cho-Polizzi writes in his Foreword to the Translations. Although the empowerment of divergent voices may not be the only path for us to fend off the advance of authoritarianism, it is nevertheless, as Cho-Polizzi continues, “a framework for asking new questions and a recognition that the world we live in is determined by our thoughts as much as by our actions.” *TRANSIT* 13.2 offers new frameworks for asking questions about archival practices: What socio-historical conditions inspire archival engagement? Who archives, and what merits archivization? How have such forms of archival engagement taken place in literary, artistic, digital, and geographical spaces? What are the stakes of archival misuse and misappropriation, and what are the parameters for making such assessments?

While the term “archive” conventionally evokes the storage of physical materials and documents, scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Ann Laura Stoler have called attention to the archive’s subjective qualities. Contrary to a definition that encompasses institutional collections and preservation, the “archive” may be better understood as a *production* of knowledge, meaning, and memory that exposes processes of transcultural negotiations, epistemic violence, and political engagement. Rethinking the archives of migration, then, involves asking questions that take us beyond “objectivity” or even materiality: Whose voices are lost in our official records of history? What is the archive’s role in the formation of national consciousness and public memory? In what way is the ability to remember and to preserve a privileged mode of being?

Before introducing the articles, translations, and reviews in this volume, I want to call attention to how archival engagement, especially in the context of migration, race, and

transnationalism, can be a practice of resistance—resistance against dominant frameworks of power and institutionalized modes of thinking. In her article, “Archival Resistance: Reading the New Right,” Annika Orich claims that now is the time “to read further, to think further, and to act further” and to resist the continued (mis)use of cultural archives that divide rather than unite. Indeed, several of the featured articles in this issue directly address the resistant and subversive engagements of contemporary artists and marginalized figures in their uses of and approaches to archival materials.

Archival engagement is also a practice of revival and reanimation. Working with archives, both personal and public, illuminates perspectives from the historically marginalized. Stoler has written on the importance of immersing oneself within the “pulse of the archive” in order to capture its unwritten affective elements. Even official archives are mutable documents, materials laden with anxieties and visions for the future. In the second installment of “Archives of Migration,” the Turkish-German writer Zafer Şenocak responded astutely to the age-old question of “What is the writer’s task?” with the phrase “*dem Schweigen abringen*”—to wrest words from silence—an endeavor requiring both physical and mental struggle. In an excerpt from Şenocak’s essay collection *Das Fremde, das in jedem wohnt* (2018) [The Foreign Dwells in Everyone] titled “Empty Archives—Lost Letters,” Şenocak resurrects memories of his mother, who longed for more intimate connections in her new environment in Germany. By reanimating the unexpressed and unwritten, writers and scholars give shape and form to new understandings of the connections between our past and present. Such a reanimation of forgotten stories is not only the task of the novelist, but also that of the archivist. As the contributions to this volume indicate, the novelist as archivist can reformulate our understanding of knowledge structures and identity categories, and thereby contribute to and reinform our practices of transcultural solidarity.

The first two pieces of this issue make important interventions in the archival practices surrounding two vulnerable populations—forced migrants, and people with intellectual disabilities. In “**Counterarchives, Appropriation and the Disobedient Gaze: Archival Structures in Ursula Biemann’s *Contained Mobility* and Charles Heller’s & Lorenzo Pezzani’s *Death by Rescue***,” Anna-Maria Senuysal reminds us that the archive is an arbitrator of knowledge. By closely examining two video works that counter and resist established archival engagements, Senuysal shows how contemporary art not only documents and responds to historical events, but also actively constructs new narratives of migration in the process. Elena Meilicke’s “**Paranoia als Migrationsdelirium und Vermittlungswahn um 1900: Zu den Aufzeichnungen von Anton Wenzel Grosz**” uncovers the sketches of the designer Anton Grosz, ostracized due to a diagnosed paranoid personality disorder, in order to shed new light on the psychic burdens of transatlantic migration in the 1900s. Through the terms *Migrationsdelirium* (migration delirium) and *Vermittlungswahn* (paranoia of mediation), Grosz’s understudied sketches reveal the confusion that results from relocation and reorientation, and the anxiety with which any archive of migration is laden.

The next five feature articles are part of Issue 13.2’s special section on “**Reexamining Turkish-German Archive(s)**,” beginning with an introduction by Ela Gezen and Mert Bahadır Reisoglu that outlines the history, stakes, and contributions of archival

engagements within Turkish German studies. Turkish German studies has long engaged with work on the archive, as shown through sourcebooks such as *Transit Germany* and past *TRANSIT* publications such as Lizzie Stewart's article on "Countermemory and the (Turkish-)German Theatrical Archive and Unbeholden New German Literature: An Interview with Deniz Utlu." The contributions to this issue's special section shed new light on the continued interventions of Turkish-German voices in memory studies and practices of the archive.

In "**Archival Dispersals: Literary Magazines as Mobile and Fragmentary Archives,**" Mert Bahadır Reisoglu reconceptualizes the fragmentary nature of the archives of migration and reformulates gaps in the archive as "archival dispersions," a term that prioritizes radical accessibility in consequent readings of migrant literature. To this end, Reisoglu reexamines the scattered collections of literary magazines in Germany and Turkey and proposes to read literary endeavors in journals such as *Ezgi* and *Parantez* as fragmentary processes of archivization. In "**Memory Meetings: Semra Ertan's *Ausländer* and the Practice of the Migrant Archive,**" Sultan Doughan traces the literary figure of the *Ausländer* in the context of Semra Ertan's posthumously published poetry collection and the multimedial archive within which it is located. Doughan stages the migrant archive as a form of embodied and lived knowledge that is especially animated in moments of commemoration, moments that expose historical processes of devaluing migrant productions of knowledge and experiences of unfair labor conditions. Linda Maeding, in her article "**The Digital Archive of Diaspora: Blogging (Post)migration,**" examines the collaborative self-archival possibilities offered by digital media, analyzing the blog *migrantenstadt* founded in 2011. Maeding argues that blogs in particular perform and constitute a new kind of migrant archive that provocatively resists and transcends the rigid contours of identity markers like "Turkish" and "German," thus offering a space for diasporic communities to connect in new ways. Jon Cho-Polizzi's contribution "**Almanya: A [Different] Future is Possible': Defying Narratives of Return in Fatma Aydemir's *Ellbogen***" explores how literary fiction reimagines ossified notions of belonging, identity, and homegoing. In his reading of Fatma Aydemir's *Ellbogen* (2018), Cho-Polizzi shows that the novel's protagonist formulates a "new, fluid positionality" between Turkey and Germany and renegotiates her own identity by juggling both her family's diasporic memory and her lived experience of disenfranchisement, thus showcasing the participatory nature of belonging. To conclude, Deniz Göktürk meditates on the importance of the personal archive in constructing and revisiting stories of migration in "**Escaping the Hamster Wheel: Creative Remembrance in Traveling Archives.**" Sifting through the handwritten notebooks and photographs of her personal and familial archive, Göktürk traces the biography of her late mother, Pia Angela Göktürk (born Lorenzi), in order to revive memories and bring forth private visions of a future that transcends borders and societal polarization.

*TRANSIT* is also excited to present translations of two important contemporary German-language authors, Ilija Trojanow and Lena Gorelik, who write frequently on migration and multiculturalism in Germany. Both of our feature translations specifically respond to the aftermath of the 2015 "refugee crisis" in Germany. Ilija Trojanow's "**After Flight,**" translated by Ambika Athreya, eloquently presents the ongoing difficulties of involuntary migration even after settlement. Images of a child "hovering between shame and protective instinct

for a parent ill equipped to confront school enrollment” and a migrant figure “negotiating between the unwieldy languages at war in his own head” will surely move readers, as Athreya writes in her translator’s introduction. Lena Gorelik’s “**Fears**,” translated by Nathan Modlin, reveals the ongoing xenophobia experienced by Germany’s minority populations. Originally published as part of an anthology of texts titled *Fremd*, “Fears” introduces readers to an ironic voice that deals with the “intricacies and banalities of being perceived as both an insider and an outsider.”

This volume concludes with two book reviews. Qingyang Freya Zhou reviews Caroline Rupprecht’s “**Asian Fusion**,” which provides a new look at the contribution of contemporary Asian women writers such as Yoko Tawada and Anna Kim, who critically respond to historical German figures such as Joseph Beuys and W.G. Sebald. Ambika Athreya reviews Kristin Dickinson’s “**DisOrientations**,” which offers new critical insights into a constellation of Turkish-German translations from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and importantly, those that are not bound by retroactive periodizations. Like the section on Turkish-German archives, Dickinson’s book brings forward new configurations and understandings for future Turkish-German relationships.

Several of the articles in this issue refer to Deniz Utlu’s 2011 essay “Das Archiv der Migration,” which was written in response to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the labor recruitment contract between Turkey and Germany, a contract that continues to bear consequences on the lived experiences of migrant citizens. Utlu’s essay offers a generative response to questions about the stakes of archival misuse and about the importance of giving voice to the subaltern. Here, and in the online archive “Unterhaltungen deutscher Eingewanderten,” Utlu captures the nature of the migrant archive, which has long been a main focus of *TRANSIT*:

Ich möchte von einem Archiv erzählen. Es trägt keinen Namen und hat keinen festen Ort. Es liegt verteilt im Land. In den Städten. In den Wohnungen. In Zimmern. In alten, verstaubten, lange nicht mehr geöffneten Schränken in den Kellern. Unter Häusern und Straßen.

I would like to tell you about an archive. It has no name and no fixed place. It is scattered around the country. In cities. In apartments. In rooms. In old, dusty, long unopened basement closets. Under houses and streets.

The archives of migration can never be complete—indeed, they grow on their hybrid and scattered foundations. Engagements with this archive sustain our understanding of history by not only expanding the stacks of material collections but by contributing to a more nuanced and well-informed understanding of the frameworks of migration. This issue seeks to provide a broadening of the field of archival engagement.

I would like to thank *TRANSIT*’s contributors for their hard work throughout the editorial process. I would also like to extend my appreciation to this year’s editorial board for offering their critical feedback. Special thanks to Deniz Göktürk and Tony Kaes for their tireless guidance throughout the publishing process. This issue was made possible through

the generous support of the UC Berkeley Department of German. *TRANSIT* is excited to continue its mission of publishing peer-reviewed, open-source digital research, translations, and art.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome Sean Lambert as my Co-Managing Editor for the upcoming issues and beyond. We are excited to pave a future for *TRANSIT* that continues to thrive on its digital platform.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sun  
Managing Editor

## Selected Bibliography

- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Göktürk, Deniz, David Gramling, Anton Kaes, and Andreas Langenohl, eds., *Transit Deutschland: Debatten zu Nation und Migration; Eine Dokumentation*. Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011.
- Göktürk, Deniz, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes, eds. *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955-2005*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Orich, Annika. "Archival Resistance: Reading the New Right." *German Politics & Society* 38, no. 2 (2020): 1–34.
- Şenocak, Zafer. *Das Fremde, das in jedem wohnt: Wie Unterschiede unsere Gesellschaft zusammenhalten*. Hamburg: Edition Körber, 2018.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Utlu, Deniz. "Das Archiv der Migration," *der Freitag*, October 31, 2011, <https://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-archiv-der-migration>.