Liminal Existences and Migrant Resistances Conference

Marquette University

March 20-21, 2020
Welcome!

It is of great joy and immense pleasure that I welcome to you to Liminal Existences and Migrant Resistances Conference at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI.

Holding this conference in the city of Milwaukee is especially significant. Not only does the largest Rohingya refugee population in the United States reside in Milwaukee, but the city is a hub for transnational cultural expression, including poetry, fiction, art, music, and dance. Milwaukee is racially diverse, with the United States Census Bureau reporting that about 56% of its residents are from diverse backgrounds.

In contrast, however, it remains one of the most segregated cities in the United States, with 26.6% of its urban residents living in poverty and only about 25% of those 25 years of age or older having a college degree.¹

With the sponsorship of the Marquette Forum, the Center for Transnational Justice, and Marquette University’s English department, this two-day conference was developed for the goal of engaging students, scholars, and activists in an examination of the contemporary transnational and transdisciplinary boundaries affecting issues of access and equity in Milwaukee and communities around the world. It is my hope that this conference will serve as a space of dialogue about global power dynamics, while also empowering the resistant identificatory practices of people who experience marginalization in its various forms.

I thank Marquette University and its faculty, staff, and students for their support of this initiative and its aim. I, also, thank you for attending what I am confident will be an enjoyable conference.

My sincere appreciation,

Ibtisam M. Abujad

¹ https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/milwaukeecitywisconsin#
Engaging with the spirit that led to the creation of the Educational Opportunity Program in 1969, the Marquette Forum will explore opportunities and challenges to creating educational access for all communities.

Building on last year’s theme, “Democracy in Troubled Times,” Forum events will engage students, faculty, staff, and the communities making up with Greater Milwaukee in conversations on overcoming the threats to the future of educational opportunity, including:

- Increased wealth disparities nationally
- Ballooning higher education cost
- Mass incarceration policies
- Healthcare inequities

As a Catholic, Jesuit university, the Marquette community is encouraged to consider these challenges by engaging with the Forum and participating in events. The Forum will also support existing symposia, conferences and colloquia related to educational access and opportunity.

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THE CENTER FOR TRANSNATIONAL JUSTICE
CONFERENCE SPONSOR

In the new millennium, individuals, societal groups, nongovernmental organizations, governments and international organizations all have intensified calls for justice. Some seek to address the legacies of past abuses while others envision a step toward the broader redistribution of rights, privileges and obligations on a global scale. While few would deny that justice is a desirable goal, numerous interpretations exist concerning its meaning, the challenges it faces, and paths toward its realization. These contending interpretations become more extensive as one moves to economic, political and social relations that extend beyond national borders.

Established in the spring of 2004, the Center for Transnational Justice supports innovative scholarly research, teaching and community outreach initiatives on justice issues that extend beyond national borders. These initiatives focus particularly on:

- Migration: including issues of immigration policy, refugees and asylum seekers, migrant workers, forced migration and human trafficking, and immigrant incorporation
- Economics, Politics and Justice: including issues of hunger, environmental policy and practice, global economic crises, and development
- Human Security: including issues of human rights challenges and protections, health care and pandemic diseases, and transnational crime

Mission Statement
The Marquette University Center for Transnational Justice strives to facilitate greater understanding of the challenges and paths to achieving justice in issues that bridge local, national, and global communities. Through fostering intellectual inquiry, the center seeks to discover and share knowledge that can be utilized in the service of others to realize a more just world.

H. Richard Friman, Ph.D.
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Marquette University Department of English

Conference Sponsor

In the Department of English at Marquette University, storytelling is our passion. We are a community of creative thinkers who love to read and learn from great stories and to tell the stories that need to be told. We know the enduring importance of critical thinking, creative problem solving, and powerful writing in an ever-changing global economy.

In our small, discussion-based classes, you will receive a personalized education from expert, award-winning teachers who will know you well. They will help you inspire your creativity and hone your writing, communication, and critical-thinking skills. Our rigorous training will push you to articulate the future you want and how you can best serve the world.

Our Mission
We are a community of scholar-teachers and students who embrace the traditional Jesuit conception of liberal education inspired by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Grounded in this tradition, the department focuses on the study of “humane letters,” which is accorded a central and indispensable place in Jesuit education and is defined as the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, and history.

Our Faculty
English Department faculty are actively engaged in research and publication as well as in teaching and service. Our faculty have expertise in British, American, and Anglophone literature and culture as well as in creative writing, professional writing, rhetoric and composition, and linguistics. They have won numerous awards for both research and teaching, including many University-wide honors. Committed to the scholar-teacher model, faculty regularly teach courses at all levels, from introductory surveys to graduate seminars.

Dr. Leah Flack
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Chair, English Department
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Invited Keynote Speakers

Dr. Dinorah Cortés-Vélez is a poet, novelist, and scholar of colonial Latin American Literature. She is Associate Professor of Spanish at Marquette University.

Ms. Janan Najeeb is president and CEO of the Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition. She is also the founder of the Wisconsin Muslim Journal.

Dr. Tosin Gbogi is a poet and scholar of African/African diaspora literatures and discourse oriented socio-linguistics. He is Assistant professor of English at Marquette University.
Conference Panels

Friday, March 20, 2020

AMU, 2nd Floor, Henke Lounge

10:00-10:45 Registration

11:00-11:55 Labor Pains: Globalism and Capitalism

Chair: Jennifer Fenton, Department of Political Science, Marquette University

Jeremy Ekberg, University of South Florida


Julian Barnes explores some of the most profound questions of history, identity and epistemology in his deceptively simple novel England, England, in which a theme park becomes a nation. Ruthless industrialists exploit English history by commodifying the nation’s culture, while the nation itself falls into decline. The novel posits a postmodern paradox in which consumers prefer the ersatz to the real and history is distorted by simulacra that offer malleability and knowability but at the cost of historical accuracy. This paper focuses on the concept of the simulacrum and how it interacts with history, identity and memory in a complex network of reference that ultimately determines what is considered history and in turn how that history is commodified by rapacious capitalists.

Richard Osei Bonsu and Mercy Adu Kontor, NGO, OMANIAE, Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Program, Ghana

“Migration and Borderlines endangering Globalization in the 21st Century”

Irregular migration represents one of the biggest traumatic moments in the lives of the travelers, rendering most African youths who were intellects and vision holders to be hopeless and vulnerable living in a state of trauma . . .as undocumented migrants and slaves for which they constitute the greater work force of their nation. This brain-drain has been a major challenge to both African and European governments. Thousands of youth are been kept in various detentions centres across Europe between 3 months to one (1) year. Majority of these youth between 19-42 years pass through mental, physiological and emotional trauma before been forced to return to their country of origin.

12:00-1:15 Nationalism: Ideological and Physical Borders

Chair: T. Michael McNulty, SJ, Center for Peacemaking, Marquette University

Justice Hagan, Marquette University

“Unwelcome at Home: Transnational Adoptees and US Nationalism”

From the time that adoption across national borders became possible, transnational adoptees have grown accustomed to the idea that we inhabit a space in the United States that is ours as much as it is that of our adoptive parents. However, in the past few years, multiple transnational adoptees in the United States have been deported, and tens of thousands of others have learned that they might have never possessed US Citizenship. This sudden disenfranchisement is part of
an organized effort to seize any excuse to banish the otherness that nationalists fear threatens their own racial and cultural integrity.

Jennifer Cullison, University of Nevada, Reno

“Caged Outside of the US Immigration Enforcement Regime for Unlawful Entry: Conditions of Confinement for Undocumented Immigrants in Pretrial Detention, County Prisons, and Federal ‘Shadow Prisons’”

Counterintuitively, since the early 20th century, immigrants unlawfully crossing the US border have not always been detained by US immigration enforcement regimes alone, but instead have often been incarcerated in prisons and jails and thus effectively separated from some structures of immigration law and policy that could benefit them. While maintaining that criminalizing undocumented border-crossing and penal conditions of confinement for those individuals remains unjust, this presentation explains some historical turning points in related immigration legal codes as well as highlights gains made and struggles remaining in the battle against undue treatment within these liminal spaces.

Armando Guerrero Estrada, Boston College

"Undocumented: On Being Latino Here and Hispanic There"

“Undocumented: On Being Latino Here and Hispanic There” is a work of creative non-fiction highlighting the educational experiences of one undocumented student in the United States. A devout Texas Catholic, he pursues formation to the priesthood, where he experiences a level of racism not felt heretofore. There, he is Hispanic. Later, he continues his studies at one of the country’s most progressive theological schools; here, is Latino. He constantly finds himself in a state of *nepantla*, a liminal space, sometimes wearing one label and at other times wearing another. One label, however, seems to overshadow all others: “undocumented.”

1:30-2:45pm ‘Unhomed’: Diaspora and Exile

Chair: Louise Cainkar, Social and Cultural Sciences Department, Marquette University

Rose Hattab, School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Arizona

“Iraqi Diaspora: Reluctancy, Identity and Homeland in Women’s Discourse”

My field research explores the socio-cultural boundaries of generational demarcation through the theoretical concept of the “reluctant immigrant,” a conceptual approach that advances scholarly understandings of “place attachment” while in a condition of displacement. Through a series of interviews and other sources, I have uncovered a pervasive sense of belonging to an imagined homeland that is highly gendered and is a result of transnational cultural productions that seeks to manage the emotional trauma of forced exile. This research is significant because it is the first academic study on the Iraqi diaspora in Arizona, with one of the largest Iraqi populations in the USA.

Jen-Li Ko, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Marquette University

“Language Shift and Maintenance in the Chinese Diaspora of Chicago”
Language usage and shift reflects the diversity and complexity of an ethnic community. This study examines the dynamics of language use, terms related to perception of self and others, and subjective understanding of race and ethnicity in Chicago’s Chinatown. Drawing from ten months of ethnographic fieldwork, this article argues that ethnic identity is shaped and reshaped by not only the dynamics inside the local diasporic community, but also racial relations in a larger society. This case study sheds light on the making of the ethnic identity of Chinese Americans by examining the generational and cultural gap within the Chinese American community.

**Maren Hawkins and Lydia Marcus, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**

The Russian-speaking immigrant community in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, particularly the elderly female Russians-speaking community, is both large and understudied. Many Russian-speakers immigrated after the fall of the former Soviet Union, were elderly at the time of emigration, and face unique linguistic, acculturative, and health challenges. Thus, we seek to illuminate this population, focusing on concerns of language, equity, and health. We will discuss these intersections as well as the implications of this information on a fledgling Community-Based Participatory relationship between the local academic and non-profit partners.

**3:15-5:00pm Keynote Panel**

**Dinorah Cortés-Vélez, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Department, Marquette University**

“*Yuca: A Rhizome of Love*”

In this *auto-historia* teoría about collective Puerto Rican experience, the tuberous, starchy root *yuca* (or “cassava” in English), native to the Caribbean, symbolizes a loving, transversal, decolonial allowing Puerto Ricans to face off against disaster capitalism, climate change, alimentary insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and diasporic population displacement to the continental U.S.

**Janan Najeeb, Milwaukee Muslim Women’s Coalition**

We are a nation of immigrants, a fact often forgotten as new waves of people come to the United States. These new Americans are seen as enriching society by some, while others define them by stereotypes and misrepresentations. I examine the following questions in this talk: How do we help these newcomers to find their voice and advocate for themselves, their families and communities? How do we empower them through civic involvement and community building? How does their story become part of the American narrative?

**Tosin Gbogi, English Department, Marquette University**

“Epistemic Resistance, Transnational Pedagogy, and the Cosmopolitan Imagination of Hip Hop”

I examine in this presentation the transnational and translational circuits of pedagogy that hip hop activates in relation to different axes of marginalities. Focusing on a wide range of global hip hop nations, I interrogate in particular how the poetics of hip hop provides for its teeming practitioners and fandom an enduring locus of knowing and resisting. I ask, in essence: How can we account for the global resonance of hip hop? In its global travel and translatability, what
features does it prominently retain and which does it discard (often through a radical critique)? Why is hip hop such an effective symbolic mechanism of resistance across the world? And lastly, what is hip hop pedagogy, who is afraid of it, and why? In engaging with these questions, I advance a theory of cultural crossing in which the global resonance of a popular cultural material such as hip hop is not only anchored in what Halifu Osumare calls "connective marginalities" but also in what one can describe as "the cool episteme of resistance."

5:00-6:00pm Light Dinner and Reception

Saturday, March 21, 2020 AMU, 2nd Floor, Room 227
8:00-9:00am Registration

9:00-10:15 am Creative Resistsances
Chair: Sebastian Bitticks, English Department, Marquette University

Ae Hee Lee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
“Genealogy of a Changeling”

A reading from a poetry collection in the works titled Genealogy of a Changeling. The poems focus on the topics of multicultural experience and hybridity, as they travel not only between countries, cultures, and languages (mainly Korean, Spanish, and English) but also selves and poetic forms. The project ultimately seeks to challenge familiar notions of otherness, belonging, and interpersonal love with a critical eye towards how these ideas are often used in neoliberal terms.

Michelle Marie Trujillo, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, L.U.N.A. (Latinas Unidas en las Artes)

Inundada (Original Short Film)

Inundada is a retelling and reclamation of the Latinx folk tale of La Llorona. It explores different versions of her story that were passed on to the maker through the tradition of oral story-telling. It approaches the subjects of intergenerational pain, guilt and shame as the products of a colonial-patriarchal environment on the human body.

Holly Burgess, Marquette University
"From Selma to Ferguson” and "On My Ancestors’ Backs"

Burgess’s poem titled, “From Selma to Ferguson” was published in print in Straylight Literary Arts Magazine (Spring 2019, Volume 13.1). Her second poem titled, “On My Ancestors’ Backs,” was published through Straylight Literary Arts Magazine’s online edition (February 2019). “From Selma to Ferguson” and “On My Ancestors’ Backs” are a part of a collection of poetry that Burgess has written on black thought. Inspired by the Black Lives Matter Movement, Burgess’s poetry illustrates the intergenerational trauma found throughout black social movements.
10:30-11:45 am Transnationalism and the Cultural Lens

**Chair: Anne Pasero, Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Department, Marquette University**

**Robert Bruss, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**

"Transnational Tragedy in the Margins of America: Danielewski’s *Only Revolutions*"

Mark Z. Danielewski’s second novel, *Only Revolutions*, employs an experimental structure that challenges readers’ ability to make sense of the book. This presentation argues that this arrangement dramatizes how stereotypical American attitudes and narratives push their tragic transnational effects into the margins where they can be blissfully ignored. Faced with making sense of both a non-traditional layout and non-traditional language, readers who read the book looking for a traditional American narrative rely on the erasure of the catalog of catastrophe that lies in the novel’s margins.

**Jackielee Derks, English Department, Marquette University**

“Strategic Encounters: Confronting Imperialism and Claiming Subjectivity in the Writing of Contemporary Anglophone Women”

Many of the novels celebrated by mainstream feminists in the West participate in the discursive field of imperialism. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak points out, Jane Eyre made popular a form of subjectivity deeply rooted in the axioms of British identity—an identity predicated on imperialist ideologies. In this paper, I examine how Contemporary feminist writers of the diaspora are reclaiming such texts and revising them to present alternative modes of female subjectivity. Using a mode of dialogic intertextuality, authors such as Helen Oyeyemi interrogate Jane Eyre’s legacy while rewriting its representation of female subjectivity through a decolonial lens.

**Meghana Sharma, Ashoka University, Kundli, India**

“The God of Most Things: Conveying Postcolonial Trauma Through Linguistic Dis-Ordering”

This paper imagines the narrative structure of *The God of Small Things* as a fugue in various forms: multiple narratives intercede the plot similar to a classic Bach fugue, which perhaps best represents the vicissitudes of the post-colonial condition of its characters. The psychiatric fugal state is linked to the trauma, fragmentation, and hybridity associated with post-coloniality. The term corresponds to the Latin *fuga*, meaning flight - the central idea in this essay revolves around detours and departures from what might be the convention, whether it is of a composition of music, or the plot a text, or a state of being. The aim is to uncover how the nonlinear narrative and simultaneous strands of the plot make the novel a confluence of postcolonial and postmodernist styles, and what such a retelling of events with linguistic hybridity achieves for the reader, as well as for the author.

12:00-1:00 Embodied Liminality

**Chair: Sam Majhor, English Department, Marquette University**

**Arielle Burgdorf, Chatham University**
“Revolt in the Thresholds: Liminal Space in the Work of Grupo Chaclacayo”

This presentation explores how liminal space manifests throughout the work of the transgressive Peruvian performance art collective Grupo Chaclacayo. Grupo Chaclacayo utilized the body as the primary site to critique Catholicism, military violence, homophobia, and mistreatment of indigenous communities. We will investigate the ways the collective focused on cross-dressing and androgynous bodies remaining forever “betwixt and between,” in order to resist the hegemonic narratives of the military state and Shining Path.

Holly Burgess, Marquette University

“‘All I Have to Give the World is Me’: Queer Identity Development, Homophobia, and Escapism in Sara and Tegan Quin’s memoir, *High School*”

“‘All I Have to Give the World is Me:’ Queer Identity Development, Homophobia, and Escapism in Sara and Tegan Quin’s memoir, *High School*” examines Tegan and Sara’s memoir, *High School* and accompanying music album, *Hey, I’m Just Like You* through a queer theory lens. Through a close reading of both *High School* and *Hey, I’m Just Like You*, Burgess argues that Tegan and Sara’s contrasting coming out narratives offer an alternative interpretation of queer identity development. Through their LGBTQ+ advocacy, music, and award-winning memoir, Tegan and Sara continue to preach queer joy, inclusivity, and self-acceptance to their fans.

1:00-2:00 pm Lunch in AMU 252

2:00-3:15 pm Religion, Marginalization, and Liberation

Chair: Ibtisam M. Abujad, English Department, Marquette University

Asena Acar, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign


Although Christian Zionism is a religious movement, it utilizes religious as well as sociological methods to garner support for Israel. Christian Zionists portray Islam as antithetical to the State of Israel and use Islamophobic rhetoric as their primary method of justifying support for Israel. In addition, a lesser-known tactic that they use, marginalizing Christian Palestinians and even other Arab Christians, fuels their use of Islamophobia. This paper shows how they marginalize Christian Palestinians and other Arab Christians (though to a lesser extent) in order to intensify their Islamophobic rhetoric in their expedition to the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ.

Shifa Abbas, Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario

“Climate, Migration and Religion: the Biopolitics of Pueblo Sin Fronteras”

With an accepted figure of 200 million climate change migrants by 2050 (Myers 2005), a tenfold increase in the number of documented refugee and internally displaced populations (Dupont, Graeme 2006), the need to critically analyze the biopolitics of climate change-induced migration arises. Most recently, the migration of a caravan originating from drought-stricken Honduras has made the study of climate change migration both necessary and relevant. Evidence of the
caravan’s rooted religious traditions within Liberation Theology and the Sanctuary movement are an area of focus. Using this as a case study, I seek to explore the ways in which religious traditions and organizations, specifically Latin American Catholicism and Pueblo Sin Fronteras formulate their bio-ethical positions in the context of climate change.

3:30-4:45 pm Migration and Belonging

Chair: Jessie Wirkus Haynes, English Department, Marquette University

Magdalena Yuksel, University of Toronto

European ‘Refugee Crisis’ and Humanitarian Solidarity in Documentary Film

The 2015 “refugee crisis” has been utilized to redirect social frustration toward promoting movements that have continuously treated the incoming migrants as figurative enemies and potential terrorists. The leftist organizations have been, on the other hand, focused on rendering this crisis in terms of humanitarian solidarity. This ‘humanitarian impulse’ can be seen in documentaries that are more cautious toward the migrants, emphasizing both empathy and vigilance. The documentaries discussed here will be Peter Lataster and Petra Lataster-Czisch’s Miss Kiet’s Children (2016), Gianfranco Rosi’s Fire at Sea (2016), Guido Hendriks’ Stranger in Paradise (2016) and Ai Weiwei’s Human Flow (2018).

Giordana Poggioli-Kaftan, Marquette University

“Sicilian Emigrants’ ‘Doubling’ experience as a Form of Resistance to Their Island’s Oppression in Emanuele Crialese’s Nuovomondo (Golden Door) (2006)”

This paper on Emanuele Crialese’s film Nuovomondo (Golden Door) (2006) deals with Sicilians’ emigration to America, at the turn of the twentieth century, as the most basic form of resistance to the island’s poverty and oppression. In the film, though, America is represented either by surreal images of unimaginative richness, constructed with the only purpose of deceiving their onlookers, or by Ellis Island, that is the border that has the power to include or exclude; to keep families together or split them; to test intelligence and exam bodies to assure access only to those considered fit to be productive in the New World. Moreover, the film displays the process of the “doubling” of the Sicilian emigrants between those who left and those who stayed behind, desperately needing each other, even if their relation is problematized by their mutual misunderstandings and warped images of each other. Crialese’s emigration story, centered on the border’s power, transcends the Italian experience, of the beginning of the twentieth-century, and refers also to the experience of the Third World immigrants for whom, in the last thirty years, Italy has become the new “America.

Ariana Chiapas, McNair Scholar

“Life and Language: Identity, Belonging, and Humanitarian Aid Among Resettled Refugees in Milwaukee, Wisconsin”

This research examines how identity and belonging detail the lives of resettled refugees in Milwaukee, while also analyzing and critiquing humanitarian aid, providing descriptive examples of how language acquisition enables refugees to better identify and belong with the country they are resettled to. This ethnography examines how humanitarian aid and the act of
“helping” in practice may actually cause harm. The purpose of carrying out this research was to cultivate a greater understanding of the life that surrounds refugee resettlement in Milwaukee through a qualitative study conducted through participant observation. The primary field site was a local non-for-profit organization within Milwaukee.

5:00-6:00 pm Race and the Politics of Place

Chair: Shaila Wadhwani-Greenhalgh, Philosophy Department, Marquette University

Alex Harrington, McNair Scholars Program, Central Washington University

“Solidarity between the Israeli Black Panther Party and the Palestine Liberation Organization”

The Israeli Black Panther Party—founded by Jews from North African and Arab lands—was a force for social and political change in Israel from the 1970s to the 1990s. They drew heavily from the platform of the American Black Panther Party, including their focus on intersectionality. This is evidenced by the solidarity between the founders of the Israeli Panthers and the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization. This research explores the intersectional solidarity between the groups.

Michael Powell, History, Marquette University

“Social Dynamics in the Dachau Concentration Camp”

Opening March 22nd, 1933, and being liberated on April 29th, 1945, Dachau had the longest operational timeline, twelve years, out of all of the Nazi concentration camps. This presentation of the social dynamics inside of the Dachau concentration camp will focus on four recurring themes derived from primary source analysis; violence, masculinity, differentiation, and solidarity. Themes investigated in the study will incorporate interactions between prisoners and guards as well as prisoners and prisoner functionaries.
With Special Appreciation

- Wendy Walsh, Administrative Assistant, English Department, MU
- Kim Patterson, Assistant to the Dean, Klingler College of Arts and Sciences, MU
- Carla Sumka, Web Content Strategist, Graduate School, MU
- Chad Wheeler, Event Coordinator, Events Planning, MU
- Rachel Gallo, Event Coordinator, Events Planning, MU
- Amanda Gottheardt, Project Specialist, Office of Marketing and Communication, MU
- Enrique Torruco, Communication and Engagement Specialist, Klingler College of Arts and Sciences, MU
- Amanda Ali, Office and Program Manager, MMWC

I would like to also thank our student volunteers and the respected panel chairs from the various departments at Marquette University.