

## Introduction

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Most recently, a number of newspapers reported on a very special tourist attraction offered in the small village of El Alberto, Hidalgo, Mexico (“Das ist kein Spiel”; Lomoth; Rodríguezenviado). Here, about one thousand miles south of the actual location, locals offer realistic reenactments of the illegal crossing of the border between Mexico and the United States. For a small fee, tourists can participate in the role play: crossing riverbeds, hills, and fields, stumbling between cacti, being chased by *la migra*, the US border patrol, being ‘arrested,’ shouted at, and pushed around. The ‘tour’ is offered weekly, taking from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Interestingly, almost all reports on El Alberto struggle with the ethics of such playful reenactments of a situation that kills hundreds of Mexican migrants every year. Is this play cynical? Permissible? Educational? On this, most papers remain ambivalent. But more questions abound: In a way, the villagers’ performance doubles and displaces an otherwise highly guarded space. What are the pleasures and politics of such a displacement? For the organizers? For the participants? What does such a displacement tell us about the mobility of highly localized experiences? How does the US-Mexico border experience translate into other cultures? What is the topic’s fascination that makes international newspapers take an interest in these tours?

The US-Mexico border may well be the most discussed border space—or non-space—to date. At the same time, this reenacted version of the border is different. Offering the ‘authentic’ experience of an illegal border crossing to today’s ‘mobility class,’ it marks the intersection of, on the one hand, a very physical struggle between movement and immobilization, and the paradigm of the free,

leisurely mobility of tourism on the other. This intersection is as complex as it is problematic, and the Mexican tourist attraction, along with the newspaper reports on it, thus highlights a number of questions central to this second issue of *aspeers*. Organized around the topic of migration and mobility, this introduction will first highlight individual trends in the research on migration and mobility. We will then use this backdrop to briefly introduce and contextualize our art contributions as well as our academic papers.

## **MIGRATION AND MOBILITY**

Migration and mobility have always been central concerns of American studies scholarship as publications and course catalogs around the world testify. Various forms of migration have shaped the society of the United States over the course of time, and indeed every group of US society could be regarded as migrants or the descendants of migrants. Whether the migration was forced or voluntary, whether the intention was to stay permanently or only temporarily, different forms of migration and mobility have inspired a significant amount of scholarship. In the ensuing debates, an interest in geographic movements has mobilized discourse, bringing together different disciplines and transnational perspectives. For example, the study of the transfer of cultural goods and ideas between different geographic spaces has brought into dialogue literary and cultural studies with the social sciences. Thinking about different kinds of movement has also mobilized the discussion on previously static concepts, such as border, nation, or community, leading to new, more fluid ways of thinking about migration. While the ‘classical’ narratives of immigration and labor migration dominated academic research until the last quarter of the twentieth century, an interest in more ‘marginal’ topics has prompted scholars to focus on previously neglected modes of migration, such as circular, elite, and forced migration, and led them to change perspectives, investigating, for example, the effects of migration.

Still, the topic of immigration as the classical form of migration has kept its attraction as a field of research for a number of reasons. Like no other narrative, the idea of America as a nation of immigrants has shaped US identity, and investigating its impact is still an integral part of American studies scholarship and education (cf. also Szlezák in this issue). In addition, the continuing

significance of immigration might be another reason attributing to the high amount of literature on the topic. Spurred by the surge in immigration after 1965 and changes in the countries of origin as well as skill levels of immigrants, public and academic debates circulate around linkages between the economic impact of immigration, illegal immigration, and crime rates. Lastly, the interdisciplinary appeal of the topic has invited scholars of different disciplines to constantly question and rethink existing theories and concepts, thus keeping immigration research an energetic area of inquiry.

Apart from immigration, labor migration certainly is among the classical modes of migration. Economic migrants cross international borders, mostly with the intention to stay temporarily, in search of better working places and higher wages. Most studies in the US context focus on Mexican workers—legal or illegal—and their impact on the sending and receiving spaces (cf. also Erb in this issue). Other studies have drawn attention to the enormous importance of remittances labor migrants send to their home countries (Delgado-Wise and Covarrubias), as well as to the fears of being displaced shared by many native workers. Recent studies have also evolved around the gateway states of immigration and uncovered the out-migration of native-born from states or regions with high rates of foreign-born populations. Consequently, scholars thought about the reasons for these movements and revealed increasing “labor market crowding [or] competition for public services” (Hempstead 467) as two possible explanations for this phenomenon (Frey and Liaw).

With the expanding integration of markets and societies in the late twentieth century, scholars became increasingly aware of the accompanying paradox concerning mobility. While globalization is mostly described in terms of openness of borders and free flows of people, eventually portraying migratory dynamics as an integral part of a global economy, nation-states and economic realities increasingly restrict mobility (Shamir). Most recently, for example, a presumed link between migration and crime/terrorism led to what sociologist Ronen Shamir calls a “paradigm of suspicion” that further inhibits human mobility. Consequently, free movement is only possible for a minority of the world’s population, while for most potential migrants, especially in developing countries, mobility is a scarce resource. Scholars identify this widening mobility gap between those termed “cosmocrats” (Adams) and immobilized as one of the key outcomes of the growing discrepancy of wealth between industrialized and developing countries as well as between citizens of one country (Jordan and

Düvell; Massey et al.). In face of these changes, increasing attention has been drawn toward more ‘marginal’ topics such as circular migration, the mobility of high-skilled workers, and forced migration.

Circular migration, which signifies a “two-way, repetitive, temporary” (Duany 356) flow of people, is one mode of migration which has been under-researched for a long time even though it is an integral component of today’s international migration flows (Duany). What anthropologist Jorge Duany studied with respect to the circulation of Puerto Ricans and sociologist Douglas S. Massey concerning Mexican labor migrants reveals, for example, that economic migrants tend to move back to their country of origin when working conditions in the receiving space become less favorable. The constant movement between two cultures does not only bring about mutually dependent labor markets but also cross-cultural ties and transnational lives.

The surge in transnational corporations brought about by globalization caused the creation of a new species of migrants—high-skilled workers. Even though these elite migrants account for only a relatively small flow of people, scholars acknowledge their important role in the “globalization of technologies and markets” (Peixoto 1032). The mobility of high-skilled workers has not yet been researched thoroughly, which led migration scholar Reginald T. Appleyard to portray them as the “forgotten migrants” of the 1990s. What seems to go hand in hand with earlier observations about the mobility paradox of globalization is that the increase in high-skilled workers circulating across international borders stands in sharp contrast to the stricter limitations on the mobility of lower-skilled workers (Salt and Ford). Regarded as desirable migrants by governments around the world and placed inside an internal labor market, high-skilled workers seem to be outside the realm of political debates in most countries.

Forced deportation is another form of migration that has received wider scholarly attention over the past decade. Whereas the above-mentioned modes of migration are of voluntary nature, the Americas have experienced forced migration as well; most widely studied is the mass deportation of Africans during the slave trade. In recent years more studies have started to investigate important aspects related to increasing deportations of undocumented aliens to their home countries, such as the treatment of these deportees (Hagen, Eschbach, and Rodriguez; Haney). Scholars also revealed that forced repatriations do not hinder undocumented immigrants from reentering the US because they are mostly long-

term settlers with strong economic and personal ties; deportation thus “simply raises the human costs for migrants and their families” (Hagen, Eschbach, and Rodriguez 85).

Next to this interest in marginalized and overlooked topics that led scholars to look at different modes of migration, the effects of migration are another important area recently energized by reconceptualizations of movement. As sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut points out, “immigration is a transformative force, producing profound and unanticipated social, cultural, economic and political changes” (161). These changes have gained further attention through the transnational turn in American studies, which opened up new approaches to understanding the effects migration has on individuals, on host societies, and on sending spaces.

The effects of migration on individuals have become a widely researched field of study, although there are still many areas in which further research needs to be done. As historian Elliott R. Barkan observes, the various issues migrants face, such as citizenship choices, occupational objectives, and educational options, differ from one migrant group to another and even within migrant groups, so that one coherent theory of how migration affects the individual cannot be developed. However, there are some new areas that scholars have focused on which complement the previous research on the economic and social status of migrants (Hendricks; Reitz and Sklar; Smith), such as ethnicity, cultural hybridization, multiple identities, and life satisfaction (De Jong, Chamrathirong, and Tran; Gutiérrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo; cf. also the contributions by Alter and Gioe in this issue). Especially interesting is the observation that belonging to an ethnicity is not the only option for migrants, who, according to theories of cultural hybridization, live with a multiplicity of identities that are dependent both on location and environment, thus exhibiting the close relationship between mobility and identity. Literary studies is a field which has, for a long time, been interested in the effects of migration and mobility on the individual, as the contribution by Nathalie Aghoro in this issue exemplifies by analyzing a creative inquiry into the mobility of identities.

Recent studies on the effects of migration on receiving spaces have shown that host societies have become more heterogeneous, but at the same time more nationalist with increasing immigration. Fear of immigrant waves has caused an increase in nativism and xenophobia, with an intensification of immigrant

scapegoating, new legislation restricting immigrant flows and immigrants' rights (cf. Erb in this issue), as well as a reactive ethnicity movement within the 'white' population (Huber and Espenshade; Morris; Rumbaut). However, there has also been a perceived trend of pro-immigration sentiments in the more cosmopolitan parts of society (Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris). The current developments are reminiscent of the sentiments witnessed in the United States a hundred years ago, when immigration reached one of its peaks and Americans had to be reminded of the human side of mobility, as this issue's contribution by Klara-Stephanie Szlezák exemplifies. However, the effects on the receiving spaces are not only reflected in individual reactions, but also in larger trends in society, such as changes in the racial stratification system and the different areas in which immigrants exhibit an influence on society.

Although different sentiments regarding immigration exist within the larger US population across all ethnic groups, scholars have observed certain changes in the racial stratification system during the last decades. While US society has always been viewed in a biracial opposition, there has been a recent shift from the perception of the majority group as white to non-black, a more inclusive category for most immigrants. This is mainly a result of most immigrants of color trying to avoid association with the black population that has suffered from extensive stigmatization (DeWind and Kasinitz). Research varies on the different intergroup relations between migrant groups and domestic minorities, but minority scholars have observed trends that point to rivalries between ethnicities, such as Asians or Latinas/Latinos and African Americans (Gay; Johnson, Farrell, and Guinn; Ochoa; Oliver and Wong).

Further effects of immigration on the receiving spaces can be found in all areas of American life: The new ethnic groups are involved politically (Ramakrishnan and Espenshade; Simpson Bueker), socially (Fong and Ooka), and culturally (Rubin and Melnick; Hirschman). Immigrants have also been said to exhibit a positive influence on the expansion of the national economy, as well as contributing to the federal fiscal system more than it spends on benefits for immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut), a view bitterly contested by others. Due to the lack of theoretical work on the influence immigrants have on US society and culture, sociologist Anthony M. Orum developed a new model of immigrants' impact on the host culture, in which he elucidates the agency ethnic minorities have in influencing the receiving society.

The effects of migration on the sending spaces tended to be given less attention in academic work and mainly focused on the so-called brain drain that emigration inflicted upon the sending spaces and the loss of human capital in general, with a small number of studies focusing on return migration effects (Conway and Cohen; Newbold; Potter, Conway, and Phillips). However, the transnational turn—in American studies and other fields—opened up new ways in migration research as well, resulting in an increased interest in diaspora and transnationalism studies. In these new fields, scholarly research emphasizes that the diasporic communities which are created through migration facilitate a transfer of knowledge, skills, and wealth from host to sending spaces, creating a working and cultural region with philanthropic, religious, and political ties stretching from the place of residence to the home country (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo; Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec; Patterson; Portes, Escobar, and Radford).

Such initial excitement in the academic world about transnational communities was quickly met with criticism from different sides. Most scholars that are currently engaged with transnational communities in migrant societies agree that transnational activities are never universal within a migrant community, but that diasporic activities are pursued by some regardless of the level of incorporation reached (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo; Portes, Escobar, and Radford). However, there has been much harsher criticism than the slight shift most transnationalism models have undergone. On the one hand, scholars point out that diasporic communities are nothing new but a phenomenon that had already existed before the two world wars. On the other hand, criticism has also been voiced that transnational lifestyles are only accessible to a small minority of an ethnic immigrant group and cannot be generalized to comprise all immigrants (Gutiérrez and Hondagneu-Sotelo). Sociologist Roger Waldinger is even more vehement in his criticism of transnationalism, stressing that transnational practices are so varied both in time and space that there cannot be any true transnationalism in the sense of a single, coherent unit.

The field of migration and mobility, then, is marked by many similarly contested shifts. For example, when gender found its way into academic discourse in the 1960s, it became evident to migration scholars that prior studies had almost solely focused on the male experience of migration, tacitly assuming gender neutrality (Pessar). In consequence, post-1970s work focused on issues such as female migration networks or the influence of migration on

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emancipation. Most recently, the widening field of gender- and sexuality studies has begun to produce exciting work on, for example, transnational motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo) or queer migration (Luibhéid and Cantú, Jr.; Carrillo), thus underscoring the transdisciplinary appeal of the field. Another dynamic that exemplifies the field's mobility as well as its power to rethink fundamental aspects of itself are the recent shifts in assimilation models. Moving away from the classical, linear model of assimilation (Park; Gordon), migration scholars have developed new incorporation models, such as that of segmented assimilation (Portes and Zhou) or selective integration (Tuan). It may be shifts like these that make the field of migration and mobility so attractive for other areas of inquiry, and that invite the productive collaboration between social science research, literary and cultural studies, and the fine arts.

### **ART CONTRIBUTIONS**

As all art is, the contributions of this year's open submission section are at once political and personal, and subsequently offer a more subjective point of view to the discussion about migration and mobility that would have otherwise been lost. Not only do they enter into a dialogue with the essays, they also create breaks and tensions that we feel are highly productive. In keeping with the idea behind the open submission section, we are confident that the creative approach to such politically charged topics will help highlight points that might be overlooked in purely scholarly discussions of migration and mobility. This seems even more important as the theme of migration and mobility has been dealt with prominently in both the visual arts and in literature.

In the visual arts, painting, photography, and film have engaged the topic extensively. Nineteenth-century American painting, for example, deals to a great extent with the Westward Expansion. Many painters, such as Albert Bierstadt and Emanuel Leutze, shaped the concept of westward migration by their depictions of settlers moving west, glorifying the promise of freedom, fortune, and a better life. These depictions supported the creation of a nostalgia of the Frontier and added to the construction of the US as a nation-state (Aikin). With photography becoming increasingly popular at the beginning of the twentieth century, the means of depicting migration and mobility changed as well as the objects and situations captured. Both immigration from Europe and the Great



Depression became important subject matters in the arts, and photographers, such as Lewis Hine, Jacob Riis, Dorothea Lange, and Walker Evans, used their cameras to visualize the various migratory streams from Europe to America and from the Dust Bowl to California. Today, migration and mobility are still present in the visual arts. The American road movie, for example, looks at the topic from a new perspective, highlighting mobility as a form of freedom and valuing the process of moving over any single migratory destination (Lau).

In literature the topic of migration and mobility is most prominent as well. First, novels explore people's movements literally, as in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, which picks up on both the dust bowl exodus and the question of social mobility, or the novels by Jack Kerouac which use the road as a place for adventure (Aikin). Second, many minority authors, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Richard Rodriguez, and Maxine Hong Kingston, deal in their works with cultural differences and the conflicts that are created between the culture and traditions of their respective home countries and the dominant culture of the United States. Questions of loyalty and the fear of losing one's identity have been as much a topic as dealing with the differences in language as a barrier of integration. Third, mobility is of prime importance to experimental postmodern literature in its interest in the fluidity and mobility of identities, frequently to be found in the works of Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and others. Their ideas concerning the mobility of identities have inspired much scholarly work (cf. Aghoro in this issue).

Out of the many submissions we received, the works of six contributors convinced us most and is now presented in this year's open submission section of *aspeers*. These submissions include poems, traveling impressions, and photography, dealing with immigration, border, tourism, and social mobility. They enter into a dialogue with the scholarly work done in the field of migration and mobility by confronting and aestheticizing the issues at stake. The contributions invite the reader/viewer to explore local stories, moments, impressions, and individual fates in order to investigate moments of agreement and contradiction.

One aspect of migration and mobility that has prompted much debate within both art and academia is the concept of borders and the entailing power struggle over their control. In contrast to claims that, in the age of globalization, borders are open to the flow of goods and people, reality looks different. Borders are

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highly guarded areas, and many nation-states and economic realities restrict the movements of people, making mobility a rare good. The poem and the corresponding picture, both united under the name “Blue yet defining,” by Daniel Graziadei illustrate these problems in several ways. On the one hand, the poem deals with the basic idea of escaping to another country to start a better life and the uncertainty of whether that dream becomes reality. On the other hand, the poem addresses the more abstract problem of defining nation-states and borders, ultimately artificial entities. The picture, which depicts the Usumacinta River, the border between Mexico and Guatemala, visualizes the poem’s topic, and especially refers back to the fact that although the river is a natural phenomenon, the usage of the river as a border is artificial. Referring to the concept of nation as a myth, Graziadei questions the validity of such constructs.

As mentioned above, the incorporation process is a central aspect of the migratory experience. Migrants often have to face a variety of problems such as the prejudices of a host society that perceives them as unnecessary employment competitors and discriminates against migrant groups based on language differences or ethnic stereotyping. The separation from family and friends, the immersion in a different culture, the struggle of learning a new language, and the difficulty to find a job can leave the impression of being lost. The poem “a well dressed man” by “jamie” gioe portrays exactly these problems to illustrate the different experiences of migrants in the United States. It looks at the major problem of being unwelcome in a country where migrants are working towards a better life as well as the problems they have to face while trying to be incorporated into the host country’s society. The poem weaves together thoughts, images, and pieces of dialogue that explore the tensions surrounding immigrant life.

The photograph “Suburban Jungle, from the Tiger’s Perspective” by Johannes Warda invites the reader to perform an unusual change of perspective. Taking on the perspective of a tiger who is outside his environment, the viewers are displaced within their familiar surroundings and are put into a position that looks at the presumably ‘civilized’ suburbia as a jungle. The car, at once a symbol for suburbia and for mobility, sits in the center of the image, immobilized, suggesting a link to static suburban lifestyles. At first glance, the car seems to be the picture’s main interest. A closer look, however, reveals that the focus is actually on the exotic plants towering over a gray suburban landscape. The photo

opens up many questions on social and physical mobility, the symbols of migration, and their relation to contemporary lifestyles.

Grit Alter's photo and travel impressions "Memory Lane" illustrate what happens when an unfamiliar, strange space confronts a traveler with a unique atmosphere. The picture, taken at a lonely Canadian gas station, draws the reader into the atmosphere of both the moment and the place. The text, reflecting on the nature and value of memories, also brings together space and time in the image of the marks on the road—spatial manifestations of the past. A very different tourist experience is also visualized in another contribution. The picture "Paris and Coney Island" by Nausica Irène Zaballos depicts the New York Aquarium mural with an 1886 quote by entrepreneur George Tilyou, linking the famous Brooklyn peninsula to Paris, France. The quote itself, "If Paris is France, Coney Island, between June and September, is the World," already opens up an early transnational, cosmopolitan perspective, and the picture itself, remobilizing Tilyou's stance and bringing it back to Europe, represents a more modern form of traveling culture.

"MOBELITE," a poem by Claudia Müller, looks at social mobility as yet another important aspect of migration and mobility. The poem depicts the close relationship between urban spaces and mobility, between gentrification and globalization, highlighting how tightly related social and spatial mobility are. The poem describes how a previously artistic and lively neighborhood turns into a clean and even sterile business area, where profit seems to be the highest good. The poem's title already offers a variety of possible interpretations. Depending on how one pronounces the word 'mobelite,' it can either stand for 'mobility,' the general topic of the poem, or 'mob elite.' The latter refers back to either the sterilization of the respective neighborhood by profit-seeking businessmen, a mob of an elite, or to the speaking subject, that feels as being part of an avant-garde, elite mob. At first glance the poem's last phrase seems overly weary. But in the resignation of "I'll settle somewhere" also lies a new beginning that creates space for new thoughts, a gesture we want to end this year's open submission section of *aspeers* with. In addition, since we have decided to physically bring into dialogue our academic and arts contributions by interspersing them, the poem also closes our publication.

**PROFESSORIAL VOICE**

Within its focus on graduate scholarship, each issue of *aspeers* creates an experimental space to introduce one professor of European American studies. This issue's professorial voice employs a format that differs from last year's volume: We took the idea of the 'professorial voice' literally and conducted an interview with an eminent scholar in the field. The spontaneity of the interview situation provides insights into European American studies with a slightly different twist.

For *aspeers* 2 (2009), we are privileged to feature an interview with Rob Kroes, professor of American Studies at Utrecht University and Professor Emeritus at the University of Amsterdam. After receiving a master's degree in sociology and political science, his academic pursuits have taken him across the Atlantic to Chicago and Calgary and back to the Netherlands. His scholarly approach to American studies focuses on European perceptions of the United States, often in reflections on popular culture. Both Kroes's research interests and his contributions to the development of European American studies make him an ideal match for *aspeers*'s professorial voice.

In the interview Kroes talks about a form of mobility hitherto underrepresented in the issue—cultural mobility between the US and Europe, which is also the central theme of his work as a scholar of American studies. He points out how European perceptions of America have been shaping European self-images for a long time and how, ironically, American technology and culture work as catalysts for non-American identities. The theme of cultural mobility is prevalent in Kroes's current works. His latest book *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* examines the intertwined construction of collective memory in the US and Europe by means of photography. In *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* Kroes and Robert W. Rydell collaboratively take the example of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show touring Europe to illustrate the complexities and contradictions involved in this cross-cultural contact called 'Americanization.'

In addition to his own scholarly work, Kroes currently serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of American History* and the *Canadian Journal of American Studies*. His merits for the development of European American studies include his work as general editor of the series *European Contributions to American Studies*, as

former president of the European Association for American Studies, and as founding member of the Netherlands American Studies Association.

In the interview Kroes draws on his own academic career to offer valuable advice to graduate students of American studies. He talks about his personal sense of citizenship as both a soccer fan and an internationally embedded scholar, about European identity, and even gives his idea for a theme song for European American studies.

### ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

This issue's first academic contribution "Bilocated Identities: Taking the Fork in the Road in *Against The Day*" by Nathalie Aghoro stands out among the manifold scholarship that is available on the writings of Thomas Pynchon. Generally, there is a striking scarcity of research that concerns itself with philosophical questions of identity in Pynchon's works. Notable exceptions are Joseph W. Slade and Joseph Tabbi and their work on questions of the self in connection to technology in Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, as well as several presentations at the 2008 International Pynchon Week at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich, Germany. Focusing on the philosophical questions of identity, Aghoro's essay thus contributes to the most recent research on Pynchon's latest novel. Her piece looks at characters in *Against The Day* whose identities are affected by different occurrences of "bilocation," a condition that enables them to be in two places at the same time, transcending physical boundaries.

In *Against The Day*, different modes of crossing borders, both real and imaginary, internal and outward, manifest themselves in a cast of characters that transcend spaces and singular identities. Aghoro looks at three different cases of doubled identities: In the first constellation, a character pays a substitute to go through his future war experiences for him, unintentionally also trading away his identity. In the second, inner conflicts of a character lead to his splitting up into two physical persons who still share the same identity while living in two different countries. In the third, two rivaling groups of characters define themselves in terms of nationalist antagonism, discover their sameness, and are forced to readjust their self-perception. Here, the framework of the national,

conceived to draw physical and identity distinctions between subjects inside and outside its territory, unintentionally functions as a semi-transparent mirror.

By dealing with uncommon, or in this case purely fictional modes of mobility in an eclectic postmodern novel like *Against The Day*, Aghoro's contribution is of great value to our overarching theme of migration and mobility as it adds another twist to the discourse. By including the imaginative and unreal, Aghoro's piece shifts the focus of the discussion of migration and mobility away from the fact-based, the static. The fluidity of identities in *Against The Day*, epitomized by "bilocation" as a particular mode of mobility, could serve as a foil against which questions of identity in an increasingly mobile world might be better understood.

Focusing on European immigration to the US between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Klara-Stephanie Szlezák's essay "The Ellis Island Experience: Through the Eyes of Lewis Hine" adds an important perspective to this core topic of migration research. Her contribution offers a close reading of several of Lewis Hine's Ellis Island photographs portraying the daily routine on Ellis Island and investigates how these pictures were skillfully arranged to convey a wide range of aspects. Szlezák's essay contributes to already existing scholarship on Lewis Hine's photography as it focuses on his otherwise less-noticed Ellis Island material.

Today, Hine is considered the father of social documentary photography (Sampsell-Willmann), and during the first decades of the twentieth century his pictures already played an important role in shaping society's views of working conditions and the immigrant experience in the US. This tradition of social photography in the United States can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, when photography was increasingly employed to visualize social problems such as the often unbearable living conditions of immigrants, child labor, or the difficult working conditions in factories. During the Progressive Era, private committees and governmental organizations used photographers' work, such as Hine's, to secure public support for their progressive ideals of renewal (Smith-Shank) and major social and economic reforms. Referring to the Progressive Era, "The Ellis Island Experience" calls the reader's attention to Hine's main goal of turning society's attention to the individual person to transcend ethnic stereotypes.

In her piece Szlezák uses the photographs taken on the ‘island of tears’ as the basis of her argumentation that Hine’s pictures contributed to humanize immigrants. The pictures, however, were not only informed by the reformist agenda Hine and fellow social photographers followed. As Szlezák points out, they were also heavily influenced by the immediate conditions of their production: fierce time pressure when taking the pictures amidst the chaos of the immigration process as well as the technical limitations of photography at the time. Today, Hine’s work is considered a landmark in American history. Organizations such as the George Eastman House pay special attention to his outstanding material, offering young scholars didactic tools that help to understand and analyze Hine’s work, thus underscoring the role his work still plays as an archetype of a certain brand of political art.

In contrast to Szlezák’s essay on the historically important depictions of immigration in the early twentieth century, Caroline Erb’s essay “Hardened Borders: A Case Study on Inefficient Solutions to the Immigration Problem in El Paso” concentrates on the current topic of Mexican immigration to the US. Drawing on social science research, her case study examines US government tactics aimed at increasing border protection to keep Mexicans from illegally entering the United States. By investigating the migratory flows between the borderplex cities of El Paso and Juárez, Erb shows that the actions of the US government in this area and their approach of ‘border enforcement first’ fail to a great extent, thus portraying the wide gap between officially proclaimed policy objectives and its actual outcomes.

Taking into consideration the vast amount of literature on the topic of illegal immigration to the US, with most case studies focusing on the US-Mexico border, we are pleased to include “Hardened Borders” as an excellent example of graduate-level scholarship on this hotly debated topic. As recent findings suggest and Erb’s case study underlines, stricter border enforcement does very little to deter migrants from illegally entering the United States (Cornelius and Salehyan). The fact that to date about half of all illegal immigrants residing in the US are of Mexican origin and that the number of illegal entries via the Mexican border has almost quadrupled only underscores the unsuccessful border enforcement measures implemented by the US government (Sadowski-Smith).

With its focus on one specific borderplex area, “Hardened Borders” succeeds in illustrating the problems of stricter border enforcement more clearly than an

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overall assessment of illegal immigration would have. The author combines already existing scholarly work with her own research and exposes a failing immigration policy. By pointing out that the strict immigration policies of the US government overlook the nation's demand for cheap labor along with the importance of kinship to migratory patterns, the essay explains why the border between El Paso and Juárez continues to be porous. With her work, Erb not only boldly enters recent scholarly and political discussions regarding immigration to the United States. Her paper also exemplifies the great potential of the format of the case study for graduate scholarship. By including original research done on-site in El Paso/Juárez, Erb adds further to the case study's appeal.

To a certain extent, then, each of our academic contributions can be seen as a case study in the sense that it takes on a very specific aspect of the larger framework of migration and mobility. Aghoro's piece focuses on one very particular theme in a single novel by Thomas Pynchon—the local negotiation of identity through the fictional condition of bilocation. Szlezák's essay on the social photography of Lewis Hine at Ellis Island scrutinizes the ways in which the classical narrative of migration to the US was represented in pictures at the beginning of the twentieth century. Erb's article on border enforcement at the US-Mexico border approaches the question concerning practicality of current US legislation by observing the borderplex of neighboring cities El Paso and Juárez. In their "interest in the specific, the local, the concrete" (Carmody et al, xvii), all contributions make visible mutual entanglements in spaces claimed to be separate.

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