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Introduction
Academic Travel: Departures

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A quick look at the end of 2022 book lists reassures one that travel writing in its many forms and iterations continues to amass fans and readers alike. National Geographic, the Financial Times, the Independent, the Smithsonian, the Washington Post, and the Economist, just to name a few, all published "best of" lists focused on travel and writing about travel at the year's close. Scrolling through the long list of recommendations, one can hardly ignore the sheer variety collected under the guise of travel: anthology, memoir, adventure tale, novel, guidebook, cookbook, music, atlas, history, and hiking tips all fell into the broader category. It would not be an exaggeration to note that there was something for everyone in the aforementioned lists. One might argue, however, that the consistent and ongoing interest in travel in all of its manifestations extends beyond the wide range of genres available. A multiplicity of perspectives and broad appeal tell only part of the story.

Surely, the timing of the latest list of travel-related publications also plays an important role in the sheer number of offerings: after the lockdowns associated with COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, the world seems ready to ready to return to travel, to travel adventures, and to reading and writing about travel across genres. If travel and travel writing have always been associated with specific historical moments, ranging from the Romantic period in European literature in the eighteenth century to the beginning of modern tourism with Thomas Cook in the mid-nineteenth century to the onset of jet travel after the Second World War, then the current wave is no exception. Yet in this post (or post-post) colonial era, can one still rely on the vocabulary of exploration and discovery to explain twenty-first century travel? How does the traveler at once participate in and diverge from the travel practices and tropes that have led us to where we are today?

We might note that the vocabulary that characterizes traveling recalls very specific subjectivities, ones rooted in European traditions. At the same time, such terms remind us that travel and writing about travel speak to multiple aspects of the human condition, aspects that extend across historical periods and across national borders. Words like odyssey and pilgrimage, wanderlust and adventure, characterize our life journeys. Travel, whether chosen or otherwise, functions on a literal and metaphorical level, providing the traveler with experiences that color their understanding of their place in world, present and future. The traveler learns to navigate the experience of defamilarization that travel exposes, compares their own limited perspective to that of others who have shared it, and recognizes the sensation of discovery at both the personal and collective level: all of these experiences make for exceptional educational opportunities and teachable moments.

This issue of *intervalla* is dedicated to the educational experience that we build around travel and how we read, write, talk and learn from it. Franklin University Switzerland places Academic Travel at the heart of its liberal arts curriculum, and this volume recounts, in part, the outcomes of that specific, educational process, unpacking and examining different aspects of grounding course goals in the act of traveling, making travel at once the subject and the object of intellectual investigation. The issue goes beyond a single approach, however, and includes other academic perspectives across institutions and programs, in an effort to contribute to the growing body of literature devoted to the practice of educational travel.

In this vein, *Academic Travel: Departures* collects papers from faculty scholars teaching in different disciplines who have either led Academic Travel courses at Franklin University Switzerland, or are invited contributors, teaching at other institutions that also integrate travel as a key part of their educational mission. Though delayed by circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the choice to investigate travel-based learning coincided with Franklin's fiftieth anniversary. The volume celebrates what many Franklin students, faculty and alum have long considered to be the most unique aspect of their Franklin education. Academic Travel, Franklin's signature program, incorporates a ten-day to two-week travel experience into a regular, three-credit course each semester, providing both international experience on the ground and an integrated approach to learning. Students are required to complete a minimum of four three-credit Academic

Travel courses, but most do more. Academic Travel brings the classroom into the field, thus providing experiential learning on site: students first build subject knowledge, then put it into practice on site, then reflect on and write about their experiences.

But what distinguishes Academic Travel, and educational travel experiences in general, from other study abroad courses? And what makes "academic" travel different from other forms of travel per se? The volume has gathered a variety of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives, as well as diverse geographies. Authors were asked to consider questions of travel, privilege and social justice, the ways in which academic and educational travel can be conducted sustainably, intersections between travel and digital cultures, and between innovative experiential learning methods and traditional disciplinary learning goals.

Like any journey, the trajectory towards publication of this volume was not as linear as imagined in the design stages. The world health crisis pushed academics into experimenting with digital communication in ways that provided a necessary sense of reassurance that we were conducting business as usual: some scholars and courses thrived in the digital, others struggled with isolation and/or health concerns. Travel was perhaps the most challenging feature of a Franklin education to recreate, as it was for the institutions of our invited contributors represented here. There are stories that have yet to be shared in full about how learning changed and teaching adapted in travel programs during these challenging times – FLAME University's Poonam Gandhi, in this volume, points to, but also calls into question projected technological ways forward, arguing that these can never really substitute for experience, and the University of the Witwatersrand's Nicola Cloete, Catherine Duncan and Anton Coetzee, too, find that alternatives only compromise the transformative potential of collaborative, site-specific encounters. All of the articles in this volume emphasize embodied experience and the value of what is gained through this in the time/space moment, "what spills over" and what "productively disrupts."

Caroline Wiedmer's work, "Liquid Learning: The Case for Franklin's Academic Travel", which opens this volume, creates a metaphor, inspired by digital imagery, to re-think the term experiential learning as it responds to questions of sustainability, and a correlated shift from global to planetary thinking. Wiedmer's Academic Travel courses deal with the Holocaust and memory, with integrated travel experiences to Poland, and refugees and mobility, offering field study on site in Greece. How does liquid learning translate into practice for students in places of trauma and extreme duress? Wiedmer's article goes a long way in suggesting how learning, when embodied, "spills" over the edges of what any travel leader can plan for, plunging students into "unexpected situations" that solicit their understanding of and for "the often-contradictory beliefs and standpoints that coalesce around a topic that is politically and ideologically fraught and that presents an emergent planetary problem with no clear solutions." Wiedmer's contribution helps us to see better how the acquisition of new knowledge and skills on Academic Travel becomes almost inseparable from the affective dimension where the messiness, and even repugnance for tastes and smells, demands a kind of flexibility that is more aptly analogized by fluids, the proverbial spilt milk which now takes on a multiplicity of new meanings full of theoretical potential. Wiedmer's investigation forays across disciplinary boundaries from social justice studies to cultural studies to pedagogy and neuroscience, and is in layered conversation with reflections by Franklin student Grace Bacon – a dialog that visually and symbolically underlines the self-reflexivity of this meditation on moments of learning on the road.

Poonam Gandhi seeks a balance in the current educational climate between immersion and technology to assess and acknowledge how FLAME University's DISCOVER INDIA Program (DIP) does experiential learning in ways that can both be enmeshed in India's "historical, and socio-cultural realities" and help students to be theoretically proficient, recording and reflecting in a lasting way on the processes of large-scale research projects in an academic setting. Gandhi argues that "thoughtful and well-rounded individuals" who are simultaneously well prepared for the job market cannot be fostered only in a theoretical learning environment – and indeed the DIP preparatory workshops not only hone students' research skills, but also provide

them with the concrete tools to produce their own documentary and photographic material, to keep their own accounts and to formulate their own emergency contacts and plans. The unique nature of the engagement with region and space leads Gandhi to reflect on the challenges educational travel programs and their necessary, inherent "real-life experience" teaching face in times when travel is impossible, especially in developing countries, where access to mitigating forms of technology that can mimic these on-the-ground realities still lie out of the reach of the majority. Carefully designed experiential learning modules, Gandhi concludes, are both more accessible and more effective than technological aids for combatting post-pandemic learning fatigue and evening out the playing field of student privilege.

Clarice Zdanski's "*A Bestiary in Masks*: Creative Practices and Transdisciplinary Approaches to the Production of Knowledge" explores the intersection between studio art and travel. Zdanski suggests that what happens at that site-specific intersection may be described as a contagion, positively connoted, where, as with Gandhi, critical thinking meets "making" through a concerted collective effort: the preparation of a contemporary ceramics exhibition inspired by the Galleria di Storia Naturale in Perugia, Italy. While working with their eyes and hands with the clay that is so important to the region, Zdanski recounts how her students were also asked to reflect on "the place of the artist" and of the institution in society in the approach to philosophical questions of the Anthropocene relevant to the current era and beyond. In an engaged sense, Zdanski's piece also asks us to interrogate what we can learn from tensions between the real and the imaginary, science and art, and, quite literally, the potential for creative visitor response and engagement with museums and museum collections that, in this world of quick fixes, can push us beyond static showing and telling and promote a slowed-down, intensively reflective artistic "soul-searching process" that also facilitates a unique brand of knowledge acquisition and production. This impetus for a hands-on cross-disciplinary knowledge conveyance that the Academic Travel experience provides, Zdanski demonstrates, can foster both a greater understanding of sustainability concerns and a "sensitivity" to our place in the world and the other living things that share this space with us, through a "journey to real places as well as within oneself."

Nicola Cloete, Catherine Duncan and Anton Coetzee from the University of the Witwatersrand, like Zdanski, center the collaborative and the participatory in the visual arts and in a simultaneous exploration of self and world, employing a "walking pedagogy" to demonstrate that landscapes are never neutral spaces, and neither are our assumptions about the way(s) these landscapes (and especially postcolonial Lands with a capital L) can and should be viewed and experienced. Reading and understanding (art historical) landscapes makes visible – and experiential – ties between "cultural positionalities" and place, and this further informs both course reactions and course structure. Moved by Lacan's "quilting point", Cloete, Duncan and Coetzee demonstrate how layers of hiking, gender, race, history, borders, nationhood and belonging are "pinned together" in evocative and sensory ways in a form of action that is always already "embodied." These "epistemic walks" decolonize and deconstruct epistemic hierarchies in the traditional classroom space and enable an immersive experiencing of the land as "companion." University course requirements and these collaborative, embodied ways of producing knowledge, because of their inherent systemic disruption, do not always sit easily together, but, precisely as a result, there are tremendous gains for teaching practice in stoking their tensions at the border of the experimental, the decolonial, the "undisciplined."

Also "walking" colonial systems and histories is Kate Roy, who asks what it might mean to take courses in the discipline of Postcolonial Studies on the road, into the empir(e)ical. Postcolonial Studies within the academy is in the double bind of being both complicit in and critiquing systemic power structures, and indeed of critiquing with the very material produced by scholars of the Global North; it is marginalized at the very point its marginality is "intellectually commodified." These ambiguities, Roy identifies, are similarly always already present in an idea of "postcolonial" travel, which holds within itself both a continuation of the colonial system (as desire for the "exotic Other") and a resistance practice that seeks out elided narratives from "behind the

scenes", but is itself compromised by the questionable means of this search for authenticity. Encountering these difficult ambiguities of knowledge, power and representation on the ground, and with an experience already shaped by reading, can in fact disrupt the managed and curated course (and tour) in productive, uncomfortable ways, producing the possibility of a more ethical postcolonial tourism that makes visible its systems. Roy's piece draws on chronotopal experiences on walking tours in Berlin's Afrikanisches Viertel and Paris's Goutte d'Or, both lived, "backstage" areas, to show that the way in which these are set up and "traveled into" in time and space matters at every level.

Learning to take risks is part of the core message imparted by Patrick Saveau's investigation into the shaking off of the tourist gaze and "trained experiences" of looking on folk cultures in Morocco to push beyond "staged authenticity" and the "pseudo-event" to a private back region of Sufi performance. The engulfing, intense sound- and mindscape of music, dance, trance, their embodied effect on the senses and the loss of control create potent parallels with Wiedmer's conclusions. Academic Travel works best, it seems, not when everything runs smoothly, seamlessly, or pretends to maintain a kind of control that it cannot deliver. Academic Travel will sometimes ask students to confront a spilling over of emotional responses that require trust, and learning in Morocco with Saveau, letting oneself be transported by sacred Sufi performance, comports challenges that words like "audience participation" cannot adequately capture. Students, even when carefully prepared, learn that negotiating cultural difference is quite different when it spins off the page or the performance space. Saveau discusses how transformative student encounters in these moments are as "risky" as they are necessary for Academic Travel to fulfill its unique function in cultivating affective learning through openness to relinquishing control to the Other, the unknown, and thereby confronting the realities of the self.

The self-reflexive "sensation" of discovery is the common project of all the contributions here. There are tensions in the experimental-experiential, in our push to diverge from travel practices and tropes we make mistakes and we learn to better navigate from them. Academic Travel, in every respect, is always already a series of departures.

BIOGRAPHIES

Sara Steinert Borella is the executive director of the Steger Center for International Scholarship, Virginia Tech's European center. As executive director, she facilitates semester and short-term study abroad programs in residence. She is committed to increasing access and to fostering engaged learning as part of this study abroad experience. Her teaching and research have focused on such topics as food studies, intersections of law and culture, mobility and exile, and travel writing. Prior to joining the Steger Center in Fall 2021, she served as the Vice-President and Dean of Academic Affairs and Professor of Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (CLCS) at Franklin University Switzerland.

Fabio Ferrari is Chair of the Division of Arts and Cultures and Associate Professor of Italian and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies at Franklin University Switzerland. In his research and teaching, he experiments with creative writing as a means to unlocking authentic reactions to the primary texts and theoretical discourse. His first book, titled *Italian Myths and Counter-Myths of America* was published by Longo Editore, Ravenna, in 2008.

Kate Roy teaches in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Germanic Studies at Franklin University Switzerland. She studied German and French at the University of Otago/Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtākou and at the University of Manchester, and has published articles and edited volume contributions on diasporic and (post)colonial literature in both languages, as well as editing an earlier volume of *intervalla* on the theme of borders, and co-editing (with Lyn Marven and Andrew Plowman) the volume *The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century*. Her current research is focused on comparative studies in postcolonial literatures and cultures and she is committed to learning critically engaged and ethical teaching and research practices for Postcolonial Studies inside and outside of the classroom.

Liquid Learning: The Case for Franklin's Academic Travel

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ABSTRACT
The article "Liquid Learning" offers an analysis of Academic Travel from within a number of contexts: the planetary, the global, the university, the classroom, travel sites and, finally the brain and the neurological processes that accompany learning. In circling inward through these increasingly smaller contexts the article explores shifting conceptualizations of what constitutes productive teaching and "useful" knowledge against the background of rapid environmental deterioration, and the social and epistemic transformations in reaction to it. How, following its central questions, do today's universities need to change to remain relevant and to furnish students with the kind of knowledge they will need on the other side of their BAs to tackle the unpredictable challenges of a world coming apart? And how can the kind of teaching and learning enabled by the out-of-classroom experience typical for Academic Travel help create the nimbleness of mind our future generations need? Two academic travels – one to Poland, the other to Greece – serve as case studies to explore these questions; a running commentary from research assistant Grace Bacon adds perhaps the most important perspective: that of the student.

KEY WORDS
Academic Travel, Anthropocene, Experiential Learning, Neuroeducation, Jeff Wall

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I. INTRODUCTION

When I was a graduate student back in the nineties planning the first lessons I was tasked to deliver to undergraduate students in Comparative Literature, I would sometimes stare at an image I had tacked above my desk. It was a copy of the 1984 photograph by Jeff Wall entitled *Milk*, which shows a man sitting in front of a brick wall, squeezing a carton of milk in one hand so that the white liquid has exploded against the hodge-podge geometry of the backdrop, the tension visible in the man's clenched fist translating into the fluid's filigree contours.[1] That, I thought at the time, was a visual translation of how I wanted reading and discussing a story to affect my students; an explosion of ideas and emotions and insights that would transport them beyond the walls of the institutional corset that held us up even as it held us back; a mixture of freedom and constraint that would ultimately lead to learning that was boundless. While I doubt those early lessons were ever that transformative, that image of a person dashing milk against a backdrop of stark lines has stayed with me as a visualization of the kind of teaching and learning to which I aspire.

Only much later did I come across the article written by Wall himself in 1989 entitled "Photography and Liquid Intelligence", in which he contemplates *Milk* while considering the changing significance of liquid as photography transitions from the analogue to the digital (Wall 2007).[2] I approach his commentary on *Milk* not as a scholar of photography might, but as a scholar of literature and cultural studies, and as an educator, with a question having to do with the significance I had given it in my own memory: could I salvage something of Wall's analysis for my own thinking on teaching, learning and the state of the university some two decades into the 21st century? Could I do so in a piece I had been asked to write on Franklin's Academic Travel program? Could I do so, moreover, in conversation with my research assistant Grace Bacon, whose comments in dotted boxes are in dialogue with my own writing? Here is an attempt in which I close in on Academic Travel from a number of perspectives, including a comparative reading of Wall's text on photography; the uses of universities in today's shifting contexts; approaches from neuroeducation and experiential learning; and two case studies of Academic Travel – what Grace calls the five-essays-in-one approach.[3]

II. LIQUIDS IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND EDUCATION

At universities, we pride ourselves on producing life-long learners, on imparting knowledge that carries our graduates forward into a productive life, on furnishing them with tools that help them tackle the complex problems of the world. But to what extent are we successful in this endeavor? Do the kinds of disciplinary structures still largely on offer to students today not also seal students into certain ways of learning, analysis and assessment that cut them off from other forms of knowledge? Wall's writing on photography might suggest as much: natural forms, he writes, referring to the uncontrolled splash of milk, posit "a logical relation, a relation of necessity, between the phenomenon of the movement of a liquid and the means of representation." Transposed into the realm of education, this relation between the movement of milk and its representation might be understood as the relation between the process of learning (in Wall's version the movement of a liquid) and its representation in the instruments of assessment used in a typical classroom – the exams, papers, presentations we are all familiar with (in Wall the moment

[1] Jeff Wall, *Milk*. The work today hangs in the MoMa: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/93456; *in situ*: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/93456?installation_image_index=1 URL accessed July 2, 2022.

[2] See also https://photohistoryandtheory.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/wall_liquid_intelligence.pdf, URL accessed July 8, 2022.

[3] I want to thank my research assistant Grace Bacon, class of 2023, for her insightful feedback and careful edits of this paper as well as for her unflappable demeanor during a year of transition. Grace Bacon graduated with a BA in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies from Franklin University Switzerland and is now studying for a Master's Degree at Columbia in Paris in the Department of Literature and History.

at which movement is captured on film). Leaving aside for a moment the question of whether the analogy of uncontrolled liquid and learning holds, Wall's observations seem to offer an answer, at least for photography: this "relation of necessity" between movement and its representation pits all natural movement against the "whole construct, the apparatus and institution of photography", resulting in a tension which he sees as "a confrontation of what you might call the 'liquid intelligence' of nature with the glassed-in and relatively 'dry' character of the institution of photography." To him, water symbolically "represents an archaism in photography, one that is admitted into the process but also excluded, contained or channeled by its hydraulics" (Wall 2007, 109).

To translate this observation to the classroom, we might ask then how natural processes of learning are pitted against the "hydraulics" of the university. For a university also "excludes, contains and channels" different sorts of learning on a number of levels: in admission procedures; through the kinds of structures, pedagogies and disciplines on offer; in the hierarchies among disciplines often expressed in the distribution of funds; through the culturally contingent and privileged forms of learning that include normative expectations of abilities; through ideas of economically and ideologically useful knowledge; and, finally, in the educational politics of any country that define both the economic possibilities of higher learning as well as who has access to education and who does not, thereby defining culture-specific ideas of the elite. Wall observes further that in its technical displacement from the analogue to the digital, photography has lost most of the liquid properties it had once possessed, and that were necessary for processing film – its "bleaching, washing, dissolving" properties, as he puts it (2007, 109). The modern photographic vision we are left with today is usually identified with the objective, technological, "cool" intelligence of digital image-making – the lenses, the calibrators, the shutters – a vision which no longer contains "the sense of immersion in the incalculable which I associate with liquid intelligence."

Why is this important? Because, as Wall points out, referring to the bourgeoning climate change in the late 80s, the incalculable appears "with a vengeance in the remote consequences of even the most controlled releases of energy; the ecological crisis is the form in which these remote consequences appear to us most strikingly today" (2007, 110). Finally, the banishment of liquid from photography as it has migrated to the realm of the technological not only refers to the entirely digitalized processes we are today familiar with, but also, to Wall's mind, alters the very historical consciousness of photography itself. "This expansion of the dry part of photography," Wall writes, "I see metaphorically as a kind of hubris of the orthodox technological intelligence which, secured behind a barrier of perfectly engineered glass, surveys natural form in its famously cool manner" (2007, 110).

A comparative move might render this question thus within the context of education: have we in our classrooms moved to a place of hubris where what we teach and how we teach invites disaster even as we claim the opposite? This may seem a bit dramatic, but let us consider where we are today, some four decades now since Wall created *Milk* and wrote his piece. We know now that as a global community we have largely disregarded the science about climate change – what Wall calls "the incalculable" – at our own sweltering peril. The question is, have we done so because, as Wall claims for photography, we have banished a kind of learning that is equivalent to Wall's "liquid intelligence"? If so, what could it mean for education and our educational institutions to promote a kind of learning that is less hubristic?[4] A kind of a liquid learning that equips us better for the future? One possible response for institutions and educators, I will argue here, lies in the kind of teaching and learning enabled by Franklin's liberal arts perspective, in particular its Academic Travel program. It anticipates, at least to a certain degree, the emerging learning environment which requires both theoretical and practical prowess, even as it understands the impact of both representation and fact on human response, this latter swiftly gaining in importance

[4] See, for an interesting discussion of the two antagonistic views, Serrano del Pozo and Kreber (2015).

as generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT and their exponential development question what it is to know and to be intelligent.

In the following I will write across a number of scales and contexts – the planetary, the institutional, the classroom and the individual students – to sketch what this emerging learning environment might look like. These overlapping contexts in turn pose expectations on what and how we learn and teach in our universities and classrooms. On the level of the classroom, I will use two of my Academic Travels as case studies to zoom in on ways in which we might engage students with collaborative, experiential pedagogy. Returning to the idea of liquid learning I will argue that, as in photography, learning and teaching have liquid components, but ones that are not relegated to the past like water is in digital photography, but rather reside on an elemental level in the brain processes of our students, and our own. An awareness of these processes is being advanced in fields such as neuro-education to help us design curricula that support effective and resilient learning. This is important because what and how students learn, what we collectively teach and how we teach it, affects not only the future lives of our graduates, but also the raison d'être of the university, indeed the health of the planet itself.

III. FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE PLANETARY

The world has changed since the late 80s when Wall wrote his text on *Milk*. The interrelationship Wall set up between liquid intelligence and technological intelligence some forty years ago was astoundingly prescient, given that we live in a world today in which human intelligence is both creating, and confronting, technologies that have poised artificial intelligence to overtake human intelligence with revolutionary algorithms, and an almost complete access to, and surveillance of, our (freely given) data. The historian Yuval Harari (2017) takes this confrontation between human and artificial intelligence one startling step further in his dystopian visions of the hackable and dispensable human, of privileged elites in control of data colonies, and of the inevitable evolution of digital dictators. [5] Meanwhile, generative AI systems have made their unnerving entrance in the form of ChatGPT and the like, which only four months after it first became available in November of 2022 improved its score on the LSAT from somewhere in the 40th percentile to 88th percentile in the spring of 2023. While lots of schools are responding by rather helplessly re-writing their plagiarism policies, this technology is developing faster than the wings of a hummingbird beat, and it is doing so exponentially, rendering more than just this metaphor questionable. From this perspective Harari's disposable human seems less sci-fi and more reality TV. It is hard not to make the jump from the disposable human to the disposable university.

With his diagnosis of the move from analogue to digital photography, it would seem that Wall anticipated the epistemological shift from humanism to posthumanism we are seeing today.[6]

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[5] See also his speech in Davos at the World Economic Forum (2020) in which he advanced the insights in his book. See also for reviews of Harari's presentation at the World Economic Forum for example: https://www.forbes.com/sites/lbsbusinessstrategyreview/2020/01/29/why-sustainability-was-the-star-at-davos-2020/?sh=5856203376a3, accessed July 17, 2022.

[6] The Oxford dictionary (2021) defines posthumanism as follows: "Posthumanism is a philosophical perspective on how change is enacted in the world. As a conceptualization and historicization of both agency and 'the human', it is different from humanism. Whereas a humanist perspective frequently assumes the human is autonomous, conscious, intentional, and exceptional in acts of change, a posthumanist perspective assumes agency is distributed through dynamic forces in which the human participates, but which it does not completely intend or control. Posthumanist philosophy constitutes the human as: (a) physically, chemically, and biologically enmeshed and dependent on the environment; (b) moved to action through interactions that generate affects, habits, and reason; and (c) possessing no attribute that is uniquely human, but instead made up of a larger evolving ecosystem. There is little consensus in posthumanist scholarship about the degree to which a conscious human subject can actively create change, but the human does participate in change."

Analogous to the evolution of the photographic consciousness identified by Wall, we are today confronting an evolution in how we conceptualize human consciousness and intelligence: a shift in how we humans collaborate with one another, shape relations with the machines we have created, and understand the palpably destructive interactions we have with the planet we inhabit. This rethinking takes us from the epistemes of humanism to those of posthumanism, which in turn ushers in a shift in how we think the human subject. We have, in other words, entered what many scientists and scholars call the Anthropocene, a geochronological epoch in which humans are thought to influence biodiversity, ecosystems, climatic processes, and interdependent environments. Living with the phenomena of the Anthropocene also requires us to re-think the scales we have been using to define educational objectives, from the national to the global and on to the planetary.[7] Each of these scales asks basic questions of us ranging from what it means to shape and belong to, or be excluded from, a nation; what it means to be part of the global, and act as global citizens; how this differs from being part of the planetary and acting as a planetary citizen; and what, finally, it means to confront today's ecological and social challenges, and effectively and proactively regulate the earth's systems. Re-framing what we are responsible for as a species, how we might re-think our relationship with other beings, and what affects us as humans, also adjusts the scales of what we consider collectively as thinkable, doable, and teachable. Adjusting to this new scale, and hence re-thinking and possibly re-casting the responsibility of a university is our challenge as educators and as stewards of institutions of higher learning.

Formidable this challenge is, especially considering the generational divide between many professors and students. While scientists are still debating about when precisely the Anthropocene began and whether to write it with a capital A,[8] human impact on the earth has begun to manifest in phenomena such as melting glaciers, unpredictable weather patterns, droughts and floods, all-engulfing forest fires and rising sea levels, deforestation and plastic oceans – changes professors can see and feel as novel and frequently remark upon as catastrophic, but that for many of our students born in the early 2000s is simply the world they were born into, the pandemic just another amplifier among others of teenage angst. While many professors consciously entered both the decline of the planet and the digital revolution, with a sense that there were distinct befores and afters, the two phenomena are norms that are baked into the consciousness of today's students. The spread of social media and closed news bubbles in turn have introduced a crisis of fact: what constitutes truth and evidence when it has become a matter of negotiation among warring groups; and in any case any information – whether true or false – seems to students we think of as digital

> Grace Bacon:
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> "In part, it can be too simple to hide disconnects between students and professors behind a 'generational divide,' because while I completely agree that there are divides between generations (even among professors and students themselves), this fails to acknowledge that students were raised amidst the anxieties and trepidations of our parents' generations. Meaning students were born into these issues not only as they relate to our lives but also the discourses surrounding them. When it comes to defining issues like climate change or the digital revolution, professors can seem stuck in the zeitgeists of when they came of age intellectually, or they are preoccupied with the *emergence* of these issues rather than handling them as unequivocal *realities*. I believe this comes less from the generation to which we all belong. What causes a distance between professors and students is when we limit ourselves to our generations rather than engaging with those of other generations whose realities have been shaped by entirely different worlds."

[7] Planetarity has become a complex trope, beginning perhaps most controversially with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 2003 proposals in *Death of a Discipline*. For a concise review of different definitions of planetary thinking, see McVicker (2016).

[8] For a flavor of the stakes involved in accepting and dating the new epoch, see Robinson Meyer (2019).

natives only a click away and is considered to have rendered obsolete long lectures on just about anything. Never mind that the concept of digital natives is itself something of a myth, and that the real challenge is not finding the fact itself but assessing its status and understanding its significance within any given context – something technological prowess alone cannot teach you. Most students, in other words, are coming of intellectual age in an entirely different ecological, digital, and epistemological world than many of their professors, for whom concerns about big tech, AI, climate change, and truth writ small hovered somewhere at the periphery during their disciplinary training before the millennial turn. This means we need to adjust what we teach and how we teach it.

How do we bridge these differences? How do we re-define what needs to be learned and how? One of the things we should strive for as educators in the world we live in is to prepare our students to be able to deal with the unexpected, the messy, the unpredictable, and – to use Wall's word – the incalculable, little of which follows the neat contours of disciplinary learning and much of which will depend on the ability to react, listen, distinguish, theorize, assess, reflect, re-think, empathize, analyze, create, translate, and implement. These are fundamental mental and emotional operations that involve the kind of cognition, differentiation, and deliberation an effective education should impart. In North America, the liberal arts model offers a productive framework to foster the interplay of interpretive, creative and quantitative disciplines, while in many European countries this admixture of disciplinary thinking takes place a bit earlier for those headed for a university education.[9] However, this interdisciplinary structure alone does not yet ensure the kind of learning that promotes synthetic thinking: it is also on the level of classroom teaching that this is achieved, and it is from this perspective I would like to discuss the collaborative and experiential learning that occurs on Academic Travel.

IV. CHASING MEMORIES AND TRACING FLIGHT: THE CASE OF TWO ACADEMIC TRAVELS

Academic Travel at Franklin is, in essence, a three-credit course with a travel component of ten days to two weeks in the middle of the semester. During the Travel period a class visits a specific location or locations, taking the theoretical learning of the course out of the classroom and onto the road. The Academic Travel requirement over a student's university career is constructed as a layered experience of at least four and up to eight Academic Travel classes that together run like a red thread throughout Franklin's curriculum; many students choose to go well beyond the requirement to enroll in an Academic Travel class twice a year throughout their four-year studies at Franklin. The two-week travel period occurs once the knowledge foundations of the course have been laid, the historical and theoretical texts have been read, presented, reflected upon, debated, and tested for validity. All the while relationships in the class have ideally begun to settle into effective peer partnerships, or even deepened into friendships, and students feel like they have just about figured out their profs, while the profs have just about figured out everyone's names. It

[9] However, the liberal arts itself is becoming more one-sided: many liberal arts colleges, even the more elite, are decreasing the majors they offer in disciplines such as history, literature, art history and philosophy, to name just some of the most traditional pillars in the liberal arts, and majors in humanities overall have been decreasing in the States since the economic turn of 2008. While a superficial read of this shift might indicate that students are, perhaps rightly, fleeing majors with poor job and salary prospects, historian Benjamin Schmidt (2018) points to an important caveat: "students aren't fleeing degrees with poor job prospects", he argues, "they're fleeing humanities and related fields specifically because they think they have poor job prospects." Aside from those studying economics, in fact, the differences in earning and employability among the typical majors seems to be trivial. That said, maintaining a careful balance between the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities and professional degrees is not trivial. Students, I would maintain, need the agility of mind that is created precisely in this balance of disciplines to tackle their professional futures. Some of the best universities understand this.

is at this point of the semester, when ordinary courses are half-way done, the mid-term period more or less successfully navigated with a faint glimmer just appearing at the end of the tunnel, that Academic Travel comes to life. Everything up until that point has been preparation for what happens next.

So, what does happen? That depends on the course, the professor, and the group. The two Academic Travel courses I want to discuss here – one on the memory of the Holocaust, titled *Inventing the Past: The Uses of Memory in a Changing World*, the other on the politics of forced migration in the EU, titled *On Refugees: Representations, Politics and Realities of Forced Migration* – were taught in the context of Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies; the Academic Travel course on forced migration was also cross-listed with the Social Justice and Sustainability Program. I have taught *Inventing the Past* eight times during my career at Franklin with different destinations including Berlin, Vienna, Zurich, and Paris. The latest iteration went to Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow in the fall of 2019.[10] Its building blocks are theoretical texts on cultural and collective memory, memorials, novels, museums, art and films, and a general history of the Holocaust, with supplemental texts that focus on the country, cities and people we visit during the Travel section of the course.[11]

Course Description for CLCS 220T *Inventing the Past: The Uses of Memory in a Changing World (Poland)*

We live in an epoch obsessed with memory: its specter haunts an array of activities – intellectual, creative, and political; its processes shadow our individual and collective lives. And yet, despite this ubiquity, the idea of memory remains elusive and forever mutable, for depending on the context in which it is invoked and the purpose for which it is intended it can take on a range of forms and be thought from a range of disciplines. The context in which we will study the workings of memory is Poland – a place which over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries has served as one of the most important backdrops to the murderous history of the Holocaust. Our intellectual pursuit will range across several disciplines including history, literature, cultural studies, urban studies, sociology and visual cultures and the focus will be on the history and memory of the Holocaust.

The overall questions guiding our inquiry into the often-conflicted postwar politics of memory in Poland are the following: how does a nation deploy memory to create what it considers a positive identity? How does this change from administration to administration? How do public representations work to elide, confirm or undermine the constantly shifting historical discourses? To what extent are minorities or "the other" included in, or excluded from, the business of inventing national identity? In what ways do the representational accounts contradict or confirm one another? And finally, how is contemporary memory culture in Poland used to attract tourists, and how does this influence the way the past is represented?

Once in Poland we will visit memorials, historical sites, museums, exhibitions, and architectural structures in the towns of Warsaw, Lodz, and Krakow, in an attempt to chart the often-tortured process by which a nation comes to terms with its past, and projects itself into the future. Using some of the rich scholarly literature on memory that has been produced in the wake of the Holocaust, we will examine a variety of sites in Poland for a cultural comparison of how our core questions are inflected by different sets of political circumstances and cultural pressures.

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[10] This Travel is a riff on an early book of mine that focuses on the ways the Holocaust is remembered in various European countries. See Wiedmer (1999).

[11] Assignments for the course include a creative final portfolio consisting of four to five tasks such as a letter back in time to one of the characters the students encountered in their readings or during the numerous visits to museums and sites of remembrance; a series of "memory" photographs or a video of the places we went that in some way capture remembrance; a cartography of the memory landscape or a journal I ask them to keep during travel; and a design of a memorial – each of the assignments accompanied by a reflective two-page paper. While the individual assignments change, the goal of the portfolio is to blend the experience on the road with the theoretical and historical learning in a creative way that matches up productively with the students' own learning histories. A recent twist on the creative portfolio is that students may, if they wish, grade their own portfolios, provided they do the work required and come up with their own grading rubrics – i.e., they come up with their own standards of performance – and discuss how they decided on the rubrics and why they feel they either did or did not reach their learning goals. My

The second Academic Travel, *On Refugees: Representations, Politics and Realities of Forced Migration,* I have taught only once so far as an Academic Travel, in the fall of 2018, and it was designated a service travel. It took us to Athens to study *in situ* responses to the refugee situation that was unfolding at the time at the edge of Europe. This Academic Travel to Athens asks a great deal of students: before the Travel portion they delve into the difficult politics surrounding forced migration in Europe as well the EU's response to it. This in turn requires them to understand and reflect upon the development of the somewhat controversial concept of forced migration since the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and the difference between climate refugees, political refugees and economic refugees. It asks them to understand and assess the different responses of an array of projects and organizations we encounter in Athens and encourages them to develop and reflect upon their own position on a vexing global problem, which gets worse each year as increasing numbers of people flee combinations of war, famine, economic insecurity, persecution and the results of climate change. It also requires them to think themselves into the motivations, frustrations, and often very limited prospects of the refugees they meet, both on paper and in person: in fact, this encounter extended into the classroom as well, as one of their classmates at the time was a recipient of Franklin's Scholarships Without Borders program and had taken the very paths of flight across the Mediterranean that we were studying.[12]

Course Description for CLCS 253T *On Refugees: Representations, Politics and Realities of Forced Migration*

This travel course will focus on forced migration and asylum regimes in Europe, with a travel component that takes the class to Athens, Greece, one of the major European nodes of the current refugee "crisis." The course offers an interdisciplinary approach to the political, social and cultural contexts of forced migration and is coupled with the study of a number of imaginative responses that help to shape attitudes and positions towards refugees. Throughout this course, students will study ideas of human rights as they relate to refugees, political and theoretical concepts that help to think through notions of belonging, sovereignty, welcome, and a range of cultural narratives, including films, public art, theatre and literature, that bring their own critical interventions to bear on the emergent discourses surrounding refugees. Our time in Greece will be spent speaking to refugees themselves, as well as organizations, including the American College of Athens, and foundations in Greece involved in the funding, assisting and sheltering of refugees in different ways, and a number of NGOs and organizations that have formulated their own responses to the emerging situation. This is a service travel which means you will have the opportunity to work with some of the organizations that work with refugee families and children.

The topics of these two Travel courses connect to questions on the national, the global and the planetary levels, though clearly the one on forced migration grapples more immediately with ongoing symptoms of some of the chasms our civilization is currently experiencing. Both classes use insights from a variety of disciplines including art, literature, film, economics, history and politics, and they both present an array of often contradictory responses to the issues we study in places that have been impacted directly. Both classes afford the students an opportunity to speak to actors and stakeholders who have engaged with the topics from a variety of perspectives, and they are encouraged to articulate their own response, or – in the case of *Inventing the Past* – to apply the phenomena we study to our own time and place in the class assignments. This helps them process their experiences and apply them in a way that is relevant to them. Their learning on the road is interdisciplinary, scaled, spatial, social, interpersonal, sensory, conceptual, and self-reflective. And, at times, it is overwhelming.

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role in this is as a coach, to give the students feedback on the standards they created for themselves, on the grading rubrics, and on their reflections on how well they reach their stated goals based on the work they submitted; I also occasionally improve a grade I feel was all too critical because it turns out that students overall are far harsher graders than I tend to be.

[12] https://www.acg.edu/admissions/undergraduate-admissions/admission-process/all-other-countries/education-unites/

Challenges can occur on a number of levels on Academic Travel; it is by no means always logistically perfect or easy to navigate for any of the participants. That can start with day-to-day irritations such as cancelled flights, late trains and obsolete visas or, courtesy of our recent pandemic, COVID certificates that do not work as they should, regulations that can turn on a dime and students who get sick and need to be quarantined (both of the travels I discuss here just predated COVID-19). Then events on location are not entirely predictable or controllable, ranging from tardy tour guides to operas that are cancelled at the last minute, from lost subway tickets, and stolen passports (in one instance happily re-found in a grungy Greek police station in Thessaloniki) to restaurants that have nothing on the menu that caters to the lactose-, wheat-, or meat-averse. Then, as Grace notes in her comment, there are different forms of privilege that need to be considered: the differences in financial might among the students, the roles of other forms of privilege that play among the students and that have an impact on the subject studies and the relationship with the stakeholders we encounter. In the interpersonal realm, sometimes the groups do not gel; some students do not get along with the professor; sometimes the budget does not allow for the amount of spending money the students hope to have, and of course the impact of this too has to do with relative privilege among students in the class. Likewise, expectations of a destination may be frustrated by the activities required by the topic of the course; professors' expectations, in turn, may be frustrated by a perceived lack of interest, and yet more so by the simple arithmetic of Murphy's law rendered exponentially more irritating in an unfamiliar place. And finally, Academic Travel can be exhausting, both for the students and for the professors: it asks of both groups to largely forego the iconic spring or fall breaks enjoyed by their U.S. American and European counterparts; it requires that students leave both the comforts of their student home, and their intellectual comfort zones; it requires of the course leader a gamut of skills, ranging from the careful and creative handling of a budget, over close encounters with various forms of anxieties, to the occasional trip to police stations, clinics, pharmacies, or the hotel manager's back office to discuss the details of the previous night's party gone off the rails. Did I mention the exhaustion?

> Grace Bacon:
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> "Academic Travel moves students and professors beyond the normative classroom-based roles we expect for one another as over Travel the entire group is asked to share their lives with each another through exhilaration and exhaustion as we truly encounter everything together. I say this, because for me, I am always most struck by how equalizing travel can be. In my opinion, the most meaningful Travels are those where we ostensibly spend two weeks living together (both in a physical and intellectual sense as we eat, sleep, discuss, disagree, excite and fatigue together). The duration and intensity of Travel is crucial in understanding just how dynamic Travel is. A vehicle for learning, not to be overlooked.
>
> At the best *and* worst times, Travel tests the agility of your humanity."

However, it is perhaps exactly these frustrations and unexpected occurrences, and the compressed learning phases in novel surroundings that allow learning to flow, that inspire mental agility and flexibility, and that bring about lasting insights. The intellectual nimbleness and poise which many Franklin students possess when they graduate also translates into self-confidence and tolerance and bondedness throughout the institution: it shapes the overall curriculum, creating a culture of cumulative learning that carves language patterns, seasonal rhythms, and a sense of institutional belonging; it enriches the relationships among staff, professors, and students; and it sculpts the identities and memories of everyone involved with Franklin. It is not despite, but because of all the challenging aspects of Academic Travel, that it tends to be one of the most memorable features of a Franklin education, a fact brought home in the many stories swapped long after graduation at alumni gatherings. It is this pervasiveness of the experience, and the fact that it flies in the face of more traditional classroom teaching that prompts us to think past the

present institution to ways we might imagine futures of teaching and learning that adjust to the sorts of knowledge we will need in the decades to come.

V. EDUCATION, NEUROSCIENCE AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Situating the tiny context of Academic Travel within the immense context of the planetary forces us not only to try to understand what students should learn, but perhaps more importantly in the case of Academic Travel, how and where learning takes place; what hinders and what promotes it; and how students can be engaged and supported with a curricular design that takes into account how the brain works. The concept of "experiential learning" has over the last decade become something of a catch-all phrase for a form of education offered by institutions of higher learning as an index of their innovation and progressiveness.[13] It is usually a time-intensive mode of pedagogy, which does well in relatively small classes and thrives on the ability to provide out-of-classroom experiences as part of a learning unit. Experiential learning also requires a willingness to largely abandon professor-centered, top-down teaching for more student-centered methodologies, such as place- and problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, and hands-on, sensory experiences. Assignments in this sort of classroom emphasize student experience, analysis, creativity, reflection, and the opportunity to apply the theoretical content of the course to real-life problems; in other words, learning environments much like those provided by Franklin's Academic Travel program.

The concept of experiential learning has been around for almost forty years. The educational theorist David A. Kolb first published his then-revolutionary theory on experiential learning in 1984, the same year Wall snapped *Milk;* both pioneers recognizing and responding to changes in their respective fields. In 1984, however, much of the brain-based educational knowledge we have today was not yet available. In the intervening years, a great deal of research and literature has been produced on the nexus of cognition, education, and neuroscience, by scientists and scholars working in a new interdisciplinary field variously called neuroeducation, educational neuroscience, or, as it is known in the US, "Mind, Brain, and Education." This new field is based on research that began in the 1960s, but really only took off in the 1990s with the help of brain imaging technologies, such as positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) that can track how the cellular functioning of the brain supports memory, cognition and emotion by measuring blood flow (PET) and oxygen levels of blood (MRI) at the sites of brain activity (Hartel and Buckner 2006). So as in photography, there is a decidedly fluid component to education and learning, only it is now slowly coming to light in education rather than vanishing as is the case for fluid in the transition to digital photography. As cognitive neuroscientist Michael Thomas describes it, the field is an emerging dialogue between

[13] Kolb posits a learning loop in four stages, which privileges experience, reflection, abstraction and application. He then maps these onto four different learning styles. The four different types of learners Kolb posits are the diverger (can look at things from different perspectives, prefers watching to doing, is good at generating ideas), the accommodator (hands-on learner who relies on intuition and other people's information rather than their own analysis), the assimilator (good at concise, logical approaches, less focused on people and more on broad abstract ideas) and the converger (problem solver, good at finding practical use for theories and ideas).While Kolb's ideas of the learning loop continue to make sense, albeit in a fairly simplistic way. the notion that students have learning styles, and that a professor's input should be geared towards these learning styles, has since been roundly debunked, but not before the broad dissemination of educational products, such as the VARK questionnaire, designed by Neil Fleming and Coleen Mills in 1992, which slices students into visual, aural, read/write and kinesthetic learners. See also the URL https://vark-learn.com/introduction-to-vark/the-vark-modalities/, accessed June 21, 2021. In fact, chances are some of the professors or students in any given university classroom today will have taken the questionnaire at some point in their career and believe themselves to belong to one of the learning categories tested. While most people might like to be given information in visual form, this does not, as it turns out, really help them retain the information any better than if it had been presented to them in written form.

psychology, neuroscience and education that focuses on ways to engage students beyond the professor-centered, lecture-style learning of the past. It incorporates insights into how the brain changes while we learn, i.e. its plasticity, the roles emotions and stress play in learning, how the brain responds to novelty, how a student's personal experience affects motivation, how the brain determines what is salient, how it sorts out information that is not salient, and how much information can be processed at any given time (Thomas 2022, 14:30 to 19:30).[14] In short, this research shows the brain to be much more dynamic, and the learning process much more fluid, than seemed evident in the mid-1980s.

But while the fields of education and neuroscience are no strangers to one another, the bridge from observable neuronal activity, as students learn, to classroom application is still quite a wobbly one. This is in part because the objectives of the related disciplines are rather different from one another: while neuroscientists aim to understand how the brain works, how it is different from the architecture of the mind, and how the two map on to one another, the field of education is interested in developing pedagogy that serves particular learning goals, a remit that often goes beyond the goals of neuroscience (Devonshire and Dommett 2010). At the same time, the hope of educators, that neuroeducation can somehow offer a magic bullet to transform classroom teaching, has produced what scholars refer to as a string of "neuromyths", characterized as boiled-down neuroscientific "insights" which are mixed with a heavy dose of pseudoscience from education and psychology to be marketed and sold as classroom tools.[15] Newer conceptions of how we might translate neuro-educational insight into effective curricula posit learning, in the words of education theorists Jeb Schenck and Jessie Cruikshank (2015), as "embodied, enculturated, contextual, conscious as well as nonconscious, developmentally dependent, and dynamic." Furthermore, they understand learning as embedded in relationships "between all parties in the room, the individual's relationship with themselves, the environment, with the context of learning, and relationships with the content" (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 76). Students, in other words, are understood as holistic, and the learning process is based on a number of concurrent dynamics, all of which can be leveraged for a good learning outcome

> Grace Bacon:
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> "The phrase 'experiential learning' seems to be everywhere, but I do not know if the phrase is used as intentionally as it needs to be. To join *experience* and *learning*, there must be a deep and learned rationale for how and why pedagogy can become (or involve) *experience*. To assume that any subject can and should be *experienced* by those privileged enough to encounter the subject from an academic (or primarily intellectual) position is something that needs to be interrogated. What right do we, as students or professors, have to *experience* something for the sake of *learning*? This does not mean so-called 'experiential learning' is bad or too problematic to participate in (as is often the easier choice when thinking about potentially confronting situations). Still, there needs to be a consideration of ethical ways of engaging with lived experience as *learning*. Franklin's Academic Travel is no exception to this negotiation. In fact, precisely because of our diverse international community and emphasis on *Travel*, we need to be acutely aware of how our privileged position relates to our 'experiential learning' pedagogy. Of course, when this comes to practically being integrated into courses, it's a spectrum ranging from those that weave this awareness into the core of the course to others that treat it as an aside. The success of this critical thought also depends on the participation of everyone involved in the course, which can never be guaranteed. 'Experiential learning' can be hypocritical when there is no consideration of privilege, *and* actively acknowledging this privilege can redefine how and why we learn."

[14] Salience, the ability to prioritize what you concentrate on, is very important because, as Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) have shown, student performance drops when they are asked to concentrate both on the "what" of the problem and the "how" of problem-solving: this is crucial information for how we design and orchestrate an experiential learning unit.

[15] See for instance products such as Brain Gym or CogniFit.

(Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 93).[16] Based on these insights, Schenck and Cruickshank have proposed a learning model they call the Co-constructed Developmental Teaching Theory (CDTT), which blends ideas of experiential learning with neuroscience.

Like Kolb's diagram of experiential learning, the CDTT diagram proposes staged learning cycles that are re-iterative at different scales, producing a fractal spiral that represents increasing complexity in learning over time and an infinite cycle that takes into account both the experience with which students enter the classroom, and their paths forward as they carry their insights from one class to another and on into their lives (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 86).

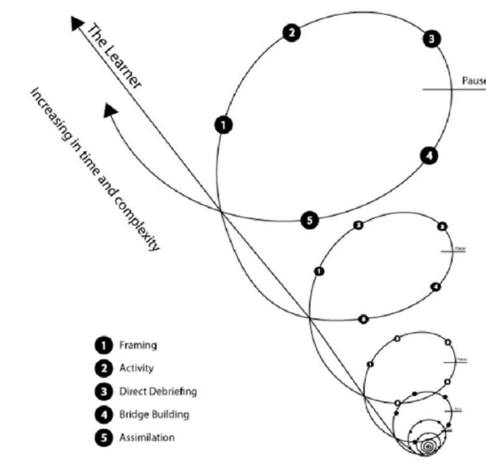

Figure 1: Diagram of Schenck and Cruikshank's Co-constructed Developmental Teaching Theory (CDTT, Schenck and Cruikshank (2015)

Each learning cycle proposed by Schenck and Cruikshank begins with a phase they call ***framing,*** in which non-conscious and psychological processes are initiated, and the learning event is primed. This phase acknowledges that students come from a variety of backgrounds, have different needs, strengths, motivations, attention spans and emotional states. By stewarding these unconscious processes, the professor sets the stage for the more difficult conscious learning by tapping into the brain's orientation towards reaching a goal (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 85). Because learning typically stops once a goal has been reached, the trick here is to find a clear learning goal calibrated to the amount of time the students are given to complete it. The next sequence in the CDTT learning cycle is an ***activity***, which begins by re-iterating the main points made in the framing session, paying attention to social-emotional skills, and then moves to the actual lesson of the class. The task of the teacher here is to find the right amount of stress – not too much, or learners are overwhelmed or intimidated, but also not too little, lest learners get bored: in both cases they stop learning effectively. The activity should consist of short, clear, attainable goals, so students do not lose motivation, followed by feedback, both for the students and the instructor, so the system remains dynamic and can be adapted. The third of Schenck and Cruikshank's four phases they call ***direct debriefing,*** which initiates the actual learning stage after an activity: it ascertains what students have taken away from the activity so far and asks after the salience of the content for each learner. In experiential learning this phase is often broken down into "What? So what? Now what?" segments, so as to initiate reflection (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 94). This is also where the learning process itself is discussed: What does this mean to each person individually? How is this salience determined by background, interest and learning environment? This debriefing session is followed by a ***pause,*** which can mean a recess, or, more likely on travel, a meal, or a good night's sleep. The last two phases of CDTT are ***bridge-building***

[16] See also Mareschal et al. (2007).

and ***assimilation***. They are at once the most difficult and the most crucial in terms of learning. ***Bridge-building*** occurs when concepts and abstract ideas from the course content are reviewed and extended to new situations; it also provides a space for students to recognize how patterns from their past experience connect with the new knowledge they have gained, giving them a new perspective that is really a new memory network (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 93). As students reflect, discuss, and explore, and begin to use this new understanding, they become on the one hand more self-confident in their new knowledge and on the other, more self-directed in the way they use it. ***Assimilation*** is the final stage. At this point, the learner has been through the phases of initial framing, activities, debriefing, bridge building, and application of the new knowledge, and they begin to own what they have learned as it is synthesized and stabilized (Schenck and Cruikshank 2015, 94).

Let's see how this works in a real-life classroom. I interpret the expression "learning event" as one single three-hour class, and when I map students' very first learning cycle – the tiniest at the beginning of the upward fractal – onto the first meeting of my *Inventing the Past* travel class. I usually frame the first three-hour class by using a typical element from the experiential learning playbook, namely the prompt to associate the topic – Holocaust remembrance – with the students' own cultural and personal inventory. I do so by asking them to think about how memory of the Holocaust is relevant, or salient, to their own lives, experiences, and cultural contexts, to compare these to those of a classmate, to co-write a paragraph or two, and then to share their insights with another group of two, and then in a round of reflection, or direct debriefing, with the entire class. I call this layered sharing. This exercise helps the students establish a relationship with the topic, then gradually with each other, and finally with me and the class as a whole. It is designed to get students talking in progressively more open forums. It also helps me get to know my students and their backgrounds, and hence their various comfort levels speaking in public, and with the topic itself. This debriefing helps everyone ease into the class – check each other out, get that first sentence out, define their stake in the class, and establish their geographic areas of expertise, all while finding their own sweet spot between goal attainment and stress management.

In a typical Franklin classroom this might mean that a student from Russia, a student from Germany, a student from China, a student from Saudi Arabia, and a student from the United States can all voice their assumptions about, and experiences of, their country's relative involvement and response to the Holocaust. Usually this ends with the students from countries where Holocaust remembrance is less culturally embedded taking a bit of a back-seat, but offering up their own national memories of foundational events, while students from countries that were shaped directly both by the period and its remembrance are either very vocal or very quiet, and some from previously allied countries debate who liberated Auschwitz (the majority of the class tends to lose this one). Everyone understands at the end of this first assignment that topics such as the Holocaust mean very different things to, and in, different countries, that memory is contingent and constructed by the communities which shape it, that there are often different takes within countries depending on which sub-community one belongs to, and that memory is always more of a commentary on the present, and on visions of the future, than on the past. It helps in this way to distinguish between personal and collective memory, and clarifies the individual's positioning within the collective memory of her nation.

The key insights I want to impart in this very first meeting of the class are that memory itself is malleable, and that each country invents its own collective memory strategy to exhibit different histories, different urgencies, different politics, different aesthetics, and different goals as regards national identity. The historical background to the Holocaust, the history of Poland in particular, and theoretical work on memory all come later. But they all build on these first insights. The first meeting also usually demonstrates that the Holocaust is a topic privileged in certain countries and not in others: while students from Western and Eastern Europe, Russia, and the States can easily come up with something to say, their counterparts from Middle Eastern and Asian countries tend to have less of a relationship to the Holocaust (unless of course their great-

grandparents happened to flee to Shanghai during the war, one of the last cities to accept Jewish refugees, as was the case for one of my students recently); the relative privileging of knowledge in different countries then becomes a phenomenon we can reflect upon as a group. Above all, this first class acknowledges that learning is a deeply social process, and that learning outcomes are correlated both with the salience of the topic to an individual, and with the trust they can feel towards all participants in a learning environment – all important information for students who have just embarked on a semester-long voyage together (and whose window to drop the course slammed shut several weeks prior to that first meeting).

Moreover, the students are made to understand that in our learning environment we acknowledge that learning is also a deeply spatial process which always also involves a level of meta-reflection on how ideas about learning translate from place to place, and how our students, who come from classrooms all over the world, will bring with them a variety of practices and assumptions about the processes of learning. When we reflect on this, we also discuss how various practices manifest themselves in classroom design; in short, we ask how students are affected by the places they come from and the places they learn in. This means reflecting on the fact that Franklin privileges not only the English language, but also US education. And it means that the discourse we use to describe what it means to be educated – for instance global citizenry, leadership, experiential learning, excellence – has often originated in countries influenced by the English model of market-driven liberalism and carries with it specific notions of competition and meritocracy that at times sit uneasily with other, equally strong values we have as an institution, such as inclusion, diversity and equity. The way we answer questions of sociality and spatiality thus steers salience, stress levels, emotions, and novelty: all factors that change the brain and shape the mind as we try to reach our learning outcomes. And that's before we even had our second class.

VI. ON THE ROAD: TOWARDS LIQUID LEARNING

Once we hit the road, spatiality and sociality of the course become central, not only our own but critically that of the people we meet. On the service travel to Athens, *On Refugees: Representations, Politics and Realities of Forced Migration*, for instance, the class visited, talked to, and worked with a number of government-sponsored organizations, NGOS, an activist squat, a prominent foundation, and the American College of Greece – all of which were involved in different ways with the evolving refugee situation in Greece in 2018 and took varying political and ideological stances on what needed to be done. We also spoke and worked with various groups of displaced persons, many of whom had initially arrived at one of the Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos, and Chios, and had since 2016 been gradually moving to the mainland, leaving behind the large and notorious camps on the islands.[17] The various groups in Athens helped those refugees who had been able to make the first step off the Islands and into the capital, before many of them moved on in a quest for Northern Europe.

As I mentioned before, this Travel was designated as a service travel which means that students are supposed to help in one way or another, and as such it asked a tremendous amount of the students.[18] The description in the box below will give an impression of the breadth of the experience, the differences in scale of economic might and political standpoint involved in the various groupings, but also of the high level of emotional flexibility required of the students as we spoke to individuals who ran the various organizations, and to displaced persons who were, for the most part, living in unpredictable and precarious situations. While those who welcomed us

[17] Moria, on the island Lesbos, was one of the largest camps in Europe, and one of the most infamous before its almost total destruction after a fire ripped through it in 2020. For safety reasons we did not venture as far as the islands.

[18] It goes beyond the reach of this paper to discuss the difficult and nuanced concept of service travel; let's just say the concept is as attractive as it is problematic.

were on time, well prepared, and extremely gracious, it was clear that they were doing us a favor, and not the other way around, as is the fantasy fueling the idea of service travel. Moreover, the refugee situation in 2018 in Athens was, and remains to this day, a chaotic and desperate one: this could be felt in the overall tension of those who were trying to help, the travel group, and in the stories of the displaced persons we spoke to.

This travel, more than any other, immersed students in unexpected situations, and some of these situations challenged their assumptions: preparing food with ingredients they did not know or found less than appetizing, cleaning kitchens, planning and doing crafts with children who really just wanted to play with stickers (to the students' credit, they got that before I did and arrived at Melissa's with tons of them) teaching yoga to women who were not prepared to learn from men, and unpacking and distributing dozens of boxes of clothes which turned out to be far from the hand-me-downs we tend to stuff into plastic bags back in Lugano for re-use, but rather boxes and boxes of brand-new clothes from Zara's last season. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the students were asked to understand, and to tolerate, the often contradictory beliefs and points of view that coalesce around a topic that is politically and ideologically fraught and that presents an emergent planetary problem with no clear solutions.

Given all of these factors, the students were hardworking, creative, and empathetic, but some were also overtaxed, finding the Travel too unsettling, their budgets too tight, and the overall experience certainly not what they had expected of a trip to Greece. Others, meanwhile, went on to write their theses on one of the aspects of the Travel. These intellectual, financial and expectational splits, however, meant that there was no consensus

Examples of Organizations Visited During the Travel Course on *Forced Migration*:

The organizations we worked with on the Forced Migration class included the Melissa Network, a network and community building platform for migrant and refugee women and their children founded in September of 2014, to provide a space where multipliers and community leaders meet to share skills, knowledge, and information. Our students were invited into their sharing economy to lead art classes for children, yoga classes for all ages, and literacy classes in English to those who were interested. They also were invited to a newly established home for undocumented teenage girls in a separate part of the city. While doing this, they had the chance to speak with the women and children who went in and out there. Another NGO we spoke to was METAdrasi, an organization founded in 2009 to help with the education and integration of migrants and refugees; we specifically visited unaccompanied minors. There we were given a tour of their facilities, a lecture on the organization, and the opportunity to speak to some of the refugees taking classes there. A third organization the students could work with was Praksis, an NGO founded in 2004, partly by volunteer lawyers, with the somewhat broader mandate of eradicating "the social and economic exclusion of vulnerable social groups and the defense of their personal and social rights." Their main clientele at the time of our visit were newly arrived refugees, but it was not exclusive to them. One of the prominent services Praksis had built up over the years was the distribution of medical supplies and clothes to those in need. Our students were invited to work with them for several afternoons to unpack – much to their surprise – the hundreds of boxes from the Spanish fast-fashion company Zara containing last year's fashion, which had just arrived that week, and to begin handing them out to people who dropped by while they worked there. Finally, we met with Alison Terry-Evans, the founder of the NGO Dirty Girls, an organization based on Lesbos, whose main purpose was to wash, recycle, and redistribute the tens of thousands of blankets refugees were given upon arrival by the Red Cross, and which, until Dirty Girls had begun to collect them, were simply discarded as people moved on, to rot in landfills together with mounds of colorful life vests.
Three final places we visited were City Plaza, a hotel abandoned in 2010 amid the general economic collapse and government austerity in Greece. It was situated in the Exarchia district, which squatter activists had turned into a refugee shelter for hundreds of families at the height of the refugee influx into Greece in 2016, calling it the Refugee Accommodation and Solidarity Space City Plaza. At the City Plaza students helped cook and clean; they saw what it meant to make three hundred meals a day on a two-euro-a-person budget, as well-trained volunteers used food deposited in front of the hotel by supermarkets, restaurants or individuals. We also visited the American College of Greece, where we met the directors of their refugee program and some of the displaced students who studied there, and spoke to representatives of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, one of the leading global philanthropic organizations headquartered in Athens, about their involvement with the refugee efforts.

among the students about the value of what they were learning, and that the class did not gel as one group of learners, but rather into about three peer groups. Looking at it through the lens of neuroeducation, it seems clear in hindsight that there were issues with salience and clarity: in other words, I had not managed to convey to everyone how migration and the responses to migration we were witnessing in Athens were relevant to us all, nor had I defined learning goals which were equally clear and manageable to second- and fourth-year students alike, so that instead of expending brain energy on learning, some students were using that energy wondering what they were supposed to do next and why; along these same lines, learning means using your working memory, and if there are too many distractions to keep you from prioritizing – frustration with the service work, resentment about the difference in privilege among the students and the amount of money they received from the travel budget, tiredness, the discrepancy between Athens-as-a-nodal-point-for-refugees versus Athens-as-a-tourist-destination – the working memory cannot focus on the thing it is supposed to. Finally, given that there was no clear path from learning about forced migration to applying and assimilating this learning as the learning cycles would have it, we needed more moments of rest, debriefing, and meta-reflection on the processes of learning to offset the sometimes contradictory positions we were learning, especially when the students' experience working directly with organizations and displaced people did not always lead to the expected outcomes, for instance gratitude. In other words, learning for some turned out not to be fluid, but stressful and even boring. For me, in any case, this travel offered a lesson in learning about learning, and about teaching.

Grace Bacon:

"Not all Academic Travels are created equal. As such, the tensions between Academic *Travel*s and academic *trips* are central to untangling how and why some students react to these Travels as they do. Sometimes students just want a break from school, so Travel serves as the perfect time to forego critical thinking for a vacation mindset. Sometimes it is the professor who wants a break, so their Travels consist of considerably more downtime or relaxation than academic activities. Of course, these just are the extremes. More often than not, the destination drives student interest in a Travel. Because we are all, at the very least, also tourists during Travel, the expectations of the course's destination can be central to how a group reacts to a place on Travel. Courses with so-called 'exotic' destinations (which tend to be those outside of Europe, Iceland withstanding) are sometimes hailed as superior Travels, while courses moving around Switzerland are dismissed by older students as banal or rudimentary (a been-there-done-that attitude).

These expectations usually have nothing to do with the content of the course but with a potential Orientalist view of the destination, meaning students often choose the *place* over the topic. Because tourism is the closest experience most students have to Travel before actually being on Travel, they still need to learn how to be an academic tourist while traveling. Many professors are wary of first-year-student-heavy travels as the tone and expectations of respectful Travel behavior are yet to be set. Similarly, during these first travels, students often have yet to consider how impactful their presence on Travel is to wherever they are. Some students, because of the curricula of their first Travels, are cognizant of their impact, while others never participate in Travels that critically consider the course's tourist footprint. Acknowledging oneself as a tourist is a must, but then professors and students must take it a step further and critically engage with the privilege that entails."

By contrast, *Inventing the Past: Memory of the Holocaust in Poland,* the travel class that takes us to Warsaw, Lodz, and Krakow to study Holocaust remembrance, typically poses far fewer obstacles to learning. For one thing, the travel portion that involves visits to museums, memorials, and people whose lives were affected by the Holocaust, including children of survivors, architects, curators, memorial builders, city planners, historians, and politicians, has the benefit of temporal distance and mediation. The goal is to understand how public space is shaped by the past, how this shaping is part of an ongoing negotiation among politicians, architects, artists, authors and filmmakers, historians, museum

curators, politicians, and citizens, all of whom participate in a constantly evolving cultural discourse on how the past shapes the future, and how the present invents the past. Aside from Germany itself, Poland played one of the most central roles in the Holocaust, and today it offers up a rich memory landscape that includes Auschwitz, the Holocaust's most iconic and most often visited, and thus commodified, place of remembrance. Poland's present-day right-wing Law-and-Justice-led government furthermore furnishes a rich case study in how collective memory in the form of laws, memorials and narratives can be shaped to serve revisionist ends.[19] And the tourist industry that has arisen around Auschwitz is an illustration of a marketing strategy that slices it close to the limits of ethics and a bonding experience for all. But most importantly, the Holocaust itself lies in the past, safely tucked away in history under layers of mainly consensual discourse and requires no immediate action. Moreover, it has lessons to teach us about how to live in a democratic, inclusive and equitable society, and how not – all subject positions many students are proud to slip into. In that sense it is empowering to students: a class that uses emotions, salience, novelty and stress in just the right proportions to allow the brain to absorb its lessons. By contrast the refugee situation in Athens takes students into the very heart of the incalculable, messy, and unpredictable present that demands complex and, in many ways, impossible solutions. While this makes the class no less important, in fact the opposite, it does pose more challenges both for the students and the professor.

VII. LIQUID LEARNING

As I think of the kinds of diagrams I have presented above, I understand how impossible it is to describe precisely what happens in the brains and minds of individual students on Academic Travel, not to mention the effects several of these trips have stacked on top of one another in a student's career at Franklin. Does Schenck and Cruikshank's diagram of a spiraling fractal do this kind of learning representational justice? Does a spray of milk? Does it help if I pick out a sample day from the travel portion of the trip to Athens?

The kind of learning we experience on Travel, pressed into one day, cannot in the end be represented by a diagram of orderly learning phases, fractal or not. The best we can do is suggest schematics at this point of neuro-educational research. While we know from the research that exploring novel environments, and indeed unexpectedness itself, has a beneficial impact on memory, and thus on learning, because of the release of dopamine by the hippocampus,[20] much more research is needed to really chart such compressed and novel experiences in the brain and onto the mind and from there into the classroom and beyond. Of course, we know from anecdotes that our travel program stands out in the memories of our students long after they have forgotten

A Day in Athens

In the morning we met with a representative of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation in their gleaming conference room, had a discussion with the director and some of the students of the refugee program at the American College of Greece, and then went on to do some volunteer work at the City Plaza Hotel that was coming apart at the seams. Just in terms of trying to assess a slice of the economy of the refugee response in Athens, this day required incredible mental agility from the students. They had to listen attentively to a presentation about how the foundation had arrived at the distribution key for hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to several aid organizations in Greece to understand how a portion of these funds were used by one of the recipients, the American College of Greece, and what it meant to its students, and finally to do service work in a squat alongside refugees and other volunteers whose organization had refused any funds whatsoever to prepare food that was entirely donated by private citizens for over 300 individuals per day over more than three years before later de-briefing in a group over gyros.

[19] See for instance Masha Gessen's 2021 article on ways in which the Polish government is attempting to exonerate Poland of any involvement in the murder of three million Jews on its soil during WWII.

[20] See for instance Schomaker (2019).

many of the carefully prepared lectures in other classes. But we don't know exactly what impact it has on people's understanding of the world, and on their careers, much less on the architecture of their minds. Nor can we quantify what it means to have a sizeable portion of their education take place on the road. What we do know so far about the properties of salience, novelty, sociability, creativity and spatiality from the neuro-educational perspective can help us design better curricula and better learning environments.

Was I able then to salvage something from Wall's reading of *Milk* for my own experience as an educator? I still sometimes return to that image that once inspired me, and the unboundedness and force of the spray of milk against that austere background in Wall's image remind me of the moments of learning I have witnessed on travel that felt transformational; moments which, through some inscrutable alchemy of the mind, personal history, abstract thought, and sensory experience manifest as bolts of insight or swells of understanding, such as when I have witnessed the same excitement in students we all feel when we begin to own a new field and think along new paths: what Schenck and Cruikshank call "assimilation." This is the kind of learning that spills over tightly organized daily outings and schedules, that thrives on moments of programmatic uncertainty and unchartered paths, that sparks an intellectual commitment or a sudden moment of empathy with one of the people we learn about or meet, that occasionally will have an entire group of students debating the meaning of something that happened during the day without prompt; learning that forgets about discipline – in both senses of the word – that is motivated not by grades or credit points or rules, but by the bourgeoning confidence of an emerging intellectual identity. This is the kind of learning that merges touch, smell, taste, and sight, with hard work, movement and insight; that opens the curtain onto a stage that turns out to be so much broader than initially imagined, and that breaches hierarchies as a group grapples with hard truths, unexpected emotion, and the pragmatics of finding the way through tangles of Greek or Polish streets; learning that is no longer contained by the hydraulics of academe, but indeed become its hydraulics: learning I think of as *liquid*.

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DISCOVER INDIA: An Immersive Experience for Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT
In higher education the need for engaging outside the classroom in an immersive experience cannot be emphasized enough for students to understand and wet their feet in the realities of the world. In the contemporary world of today, students have to be quick learners, absorbing and processing the changes of the ever-evolving work and life environment. Experiential learning can help bridge the gap between theoretical understanding that occurs in the classroom and learning the practicalities of life. Immersion at the grassroots and in the world outside the four walls of the university brings in newer perspectives and lenses to view the world.

This article delineates the contours of experiential learning at FLAME university – the Discover India Program. This program is a mandatory four credits co-curricular program which engages students outside the university by providing them an immersive experience in exploring the real India. We have 170 plus research projects undertaken by students over the past decade. Undergraduate students actively engage in researching any aspect of Indian society and culture by designing research, conducting on-field data collection and analyzing the data for a constructive report on the chosen topic. Their field immersion is supervised and guided by a faculty mentor and the faculty mentors help the students navigate the research as well as the field experience.

This article will also highlight the changes which had to be made to the Discover India Program during the COVID-19 pandemic and will examine the ways in which students had to make do with the restricted learning without the actual on field experience.

KEY WORDS
Experiential Learning, Educational Travel, Field Immersion, Student Research

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions over the last few decades have consistently undergone rapid change to keep up with the fast-paced, technology-driven, dynamic world of today. In higher education the need to engage outside the classroom for an immersive experience for students has been emphasized to understand and wet their feet in the realities of the world. In the contemporary world, students must be quick learners, absorbing and processing the changes of the ever-evolving work and life environment. Experiential learning can help bridge the gap between the theoretical understanding that occurs in the classroom and learning and understanding the practicalities of life. Immersion at the grassroots and in the world outside the four walls of the university/college brings in newer perspectives and lenses to view the society we live in.

In 1984, David Kolb, an educational theorist, developed an experiential learning module. He believed that any new learning can be drawn from new experiences. He introduced a four-stage learning module that many universities including Ivy League colleges like Harvard implement. The stages include Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation of That Experience, Abstract Conceptualization and Active Experimentation (Mcleod 2023). This learning process helps a learner understand a concept of any lesson by themselves, and they are merely guided by the educator, while the experience is truly their teacher. Kolb strongly advocated the need for experiential learning programs across the world. Harvard Professors even customize Kolb's four stages to meet their program outcome requirements (Austin 2021). Many such programs can hone the student's ability to face real-world challenges. Even if the student fails at a task in any experiential program, they are equipped to face failures in the outside world. It is no longer about success or failure, for Kolb it is about learning from any experience that can result in a concrete conceptual understanding.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Higher Education, apart from a degree-offering sector, provides access to jobs, and is a gateway to the world which is likely to offer a stable life. Higher education prepares students to face the realities of work life in addition to becoming socially conscious, knowledgeable citizens, and the key to this is a holistic education. Higher education must aim to develop thoughtful and well-rounded individuals. Many universities across the globe highlight a holistic educational experience with job-ready skills. How can these be achieved within a short span of in-class teaching-learning experiences? Learning theories and reading about society will not suffice to gain an in depth understanding of work and its culture. Students need to be able to practice and hone their skills in a real-time situation. There are specialized degree programs that may not encourage college students to engage with the outside world while they study, which is why immersive experiences are essential to enable students to experience the real world outside the "walled" college education. Experiential learning is an immersive learning process whereby students "learn by doing" and reflect on their experience. Experiential learning activities can include, but are not limited to, hands-on laboratory experiments, internships, practicums, field exercises, study abroad, undergraduate research and studio performances. Well-planned, well-supervised and well-assessed experiential learning programs can stimulate academic inquiry by promoting interdisciplinary learning, civic engagement, career development, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional and intellectual skills.

THE DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM AT FLAME UNIVERSITY

The Discover India Program, the experiential learning program at FLAME University, was designed to provide an immersive experience for students undertaking their undergraduate studies. The objectives of this program are (i) to enable students to explore and understand aspects of the

cultural-historical, ecological heritage of India and equally, to understand nuances associated with its unique social and economic institutions, livelihood practices and ways of life; (ii) to develop a critical approach to studying aspects of society; (iii) to introduce students to research methods; (iv) to train students in team-work and group strategy; (v) to enable students to communicate and present data in creative ways; (vi) to train students in methods of project formulation, written and visual documentation and presentation. This program was designed to connect students to the historical and socio-cultural realities of India with a focus on exploring and experiencing diverse aspects of Indian society such as communities, habitat, wildlife, ecology, fine and performing arts, historical monuments and architecture, social customs, religious traditions/practices, festivals, rites, sports, entrepreneurial practices, media, agricultural practices, political systems, etc. The highlight of this program is the field visit to the area of research study and the week-long stay there to collect data while immersing in the real world. Through this program, students learn to connect classroom learning with the real world and draw connections, and this enhances their understanding of the ground realities of society.

This program is a mandatory four-credit co-curricular group-based program for second-year undergraduate students at FLAME University. This program is held concurrently with other courses for second year students. The students actively engage in researching any aspect of Indian society and culture by designing research, conducting on-field data collection and analyzing the data for a constructive report on the chosen topic. In addition to the report the student groups are expected to create a documentary on the topic and to make a final group presentation. Students' field immersion is supervised and guided by a faculty mentor, and with the help of the faculty mentors the students navigate the research as well as the field experience.

Students conduct secondary research and create an extensive literature review before visiting the chosen site to collect primary data and get a first-hand experience of the field. DIP is purely exploratory in nature which allows students to develop critical insights as well as to learn basic methods of project formulation and written and visual documentation. Before they visit the field for their research, students are trained through masterclasses on research methods, ethics in research, account keeping, planning logistics and report writing, and they undertake documentary and photography workshops. Once back from the field, the students are expected to write a research report, create a documentary and give presentations on the researched topics. The significance of preparation before embarking on their field work cannot be emphasized enough. The masterclasses on research methods cover topics on proposal writing, constructing a literature review, research methods both qualitative and quantitative and report writing. The students are encouraged to form groups with members from different disciplines with varied skill-sets as the project is undertaken in groups, with the expectation that each student contributes to the research project. The main requirements of the program are active participation in all stages of the program. The program is announced for students in their second year in September and the final deliverable is in April, so this is an eight-month long course spanning two semesters. The following are brief stages and timelines for the students.

Table 1:

DIP Timeline for Students	
SEPTEMBER	Announcing DIP
	Orientation for Students
	Orientation for Faculty Mentors
OCTOBER	Student-Group Formation, Faculty Mentor-Group Pairing and Topic Submission
	Masterclass 1 – Proposal & Report Writing: Basics

	Masterclass 2 – Conducting Research & Digital Ethnography
NOVEMBER	Masterclass 3 – Qualitative & Qualitative Research Methods
	Masterclass 4 – Research Ethics, Sensitivity & Field Etiquette
	Research Proposal Submission
DECEMBER	Moodle Test on Research methods
JANUARY	Masterclass 5 – Photography
	Masterclass 6 – Documentary Making
	Masterclass 7 – Editing
	Masterclass 8 – DIP Accounts & Logistics Planning
FEBRUARY	Pre-Field Group Presentation
	DIP Fieldwork Week (8-9 days)
MARCH-APRIL	DIP Report Submission
	Documentary Submission
	DIP Finale: Presentations & Documentary Screenings

The field engagement and immersion are 8-9 days which includes a train journey to and from campus to the chosen site which could be in a different state of India. The final deliverables are group based, however the research methods test on Moodle, reflection essay and on-field and off-field contribution are individual grading components. The final presentations and documentary screenings are a university-wide event wherein the extended university community – faculty, students, staff and parents – is invited to witness and encourage students.

Apart from DIP faculty mentors, the DIP committee and the university provide support and facilitate the execution of DIP programs of this scale. The students are expected to do a thorough search for key informants, hospitals and clinics for emergencies, and to be prepared for any exigencies while on field. Though not mandatory depending on the topic and the place where the students conduct their research, students have shared their suggestions as possible policy recommendations with local government bodies or published their reports on platforms for undergraduate research (for example, "Stepping into Patan: A Case Study of Gentrification in Tier-III Cities", a DIP 2021 project, was published as a paper in ORF [Observer Research Foundation] https://www.orfonline.org/research/pathways-to-gentrification-in-india/).

Over the past decade 180 plus research projects have been completed by the students of FLAME University. To illustrate the diversity of topics covered by the students, the following two projects are briefly explained:

Bandhavgarh National Park

Students traveled to this park located in Central India in the state of Madhya Pradesh (2017-2018). The Bandhavgarh National Park is a game preserve turned national park with a rich cultural and mythological past. With conservation of tigers among other wild animals being one of their main goals, it has one of the highest tiger densities in the world. The sociological, ecological and economic impact of the park was analyzed through the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, such as members from seven village communities settled in and around the park, forest department officials and local guides. Apart from other research components the report comprised an

understanding of the policy related to National Parks in India and the suggestion of a preservationist approach to human-animal conflict, studied through DIP.
(https://dip.flame.edu.in/projects/bandhavgarh-national-park-from-guns-to-cameras/)

Mud and Mirror Work
Students conducted their field research in western India in the Kutch region (2014-2015). Mud and Mirror Work, an art form found in the region of Kutch, is one of the many art forms in a land of varied handicrafts. This research revolved around understanding and documenting the practice and evolution of *Lippan* (the practice of applying a mixture of dung and mud onto various surfaces) and *Chittar Kaam* (mud and mirror) in homes across the communities practicing it. Further, it focused on the cultural contribution of *Chittar Kaam* in the *Rann Utsav* and the role of the government and NGOs in the preservation and promotion of the art form. The report also tried to examine the impact of the 2001 earthquake on the art form and the changes brought to it by the advent of commercialization.
(https://dip.flame.edu.in/documentaries/)

Figure 1: Mud and Mirror work in a hut in the village

Figure 2: Students experiencing how embroidery work is done and sold

The program outcomes are met through the process of planning, researching, field trips, collective creation of reports, documentaries and presentations. Getting an opportunity to solve or face on-field challenges and problems and to work in teams despite differences of opinions and differing views are the major advantages of DIP. Students' learning goes beyond the outcomes of the programs and their experiences are unique to the region of study, which cannot be replicated in a virtual format. Can we visualize an experience of this kind without going on field in groups – or indeed, if the world had to face another lockdown, how could we continue to conduct a program of this nature?

EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: REALIGNING AND MODIFYING THE PROGRAM

The challenges faced by educational institutions when the world was under the lockdown due to COVID-19 impacted the students' learning significantly. Experiential learning suffered greatly while all teaching and learning transitioned to virtual formats. With our university's Discover India Program having to go completely online, the alternative was to continue the group research through desk research and hope that the students would at some point get an opportunity to visit the field. The challenge was to provide some sort of real-life experience, which with the global lockdown seemed next to impossible.

For two years DIP had to be done online without the real-world involvement. Desk research could in no way substitute the on-field practical experience. Moreover, students had to work in groups remotely from their respective homes and that led to a different set of challenges. Students had to manage and come up with practical solutions to remote working conditions. One of the groups, I mentored worked on the Matrilineal Society of Meghalaya with a focus on change and continuity in the community. This region of India lies in the North Eastern part of the country which is generally cut off from rest of the country due to its terrain, and initially the students thought they would end up doing only secondary research. Here is an excerpt written by students who undertook their DIP online. This excerpt is from the FLAME University magazine "IGNITE" in which the students are reflecting on the adjustment and acceptance of the situation in which they were deprived of experiencing field work:

> Once we were familiar with the literature and our secondary sources were established, we undertook the search for primary sources. In a world before the pandemic, we would have had the opportunity to conduct in-person interviews. Through on-field immersion, we would have been able to gather information not only through our interviews but also through constant observation of the participants and the surroundings. Being able to visit Meghalaya would've broadened our horizons and allowed us to explore spheres of their community that are indiscernible due to the online nature. Nevertheless, our reality is the pandemic. With the new normal, we resorted to the only option available to us during these times: online interviews. (Tibrewala and Wanigasekera 2021, 21)

The student groups working on different topics remotely were unfortunately not able to experience the program holistically, thereby defeating the very purpose of experiential learning. However, the students managed to conduct secondary research with some online interviews and produced a research report on their chosen topics.

In case, in the future, it is once again impossible to undertake real world immersion, are there alternatives to create similar experiences and learnings? The pandemic led to innovative and alternative ways to combat the challenges of a lockdown. This has led to considering virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) as sources of alternative methods. Can these modes help drive experiential learning and be a substitute for real immersion? They can definitely recreate a scenario

using high-grade graphics and technology almost perfectly and help a student hone their skill-sets in a safe environment. While AR and VR can become the new age experiential learning platforms, this still poses significant drawbacks. It cannot effectively stimulate careers that rely heavily on human interaction. Technology such as AI or AR/VR can be very expensive to implement across the globe, especially in third world countries. Indeed, for all students in India and for developing countries, having access to this technology seems like a distant dream. Yet, many studies point to how immersive technology can result in the attainment of procedural knowledge more effectively. For a better understanding of the stakeholders', teachers', educators' and students' views on this form of immersive learning, more research in the same field is required which can result in data on the implication of VR and its effectiveness in delivering experiential learning better than traditional ways of teaching (Makransky and Petersen 2021). It can also help solve post-pandemic education problems. Most schools are trying to increase the time of learning post-pandemic to make up for the lost time which has resulted in learning fatigue among the students. In fact, most minority students in the U.S. are worried that they have fallen behind in school (Anderson, Faverio and McClean 2022). In India, unfortunately thousands of children did not have access to online learning, given that tablets and smart phones are still luxury goods and not within the reach of common person struggling to survive. Technology can aid and support learning, but cannot substitute learning by experiencing. Experiential learning, now more than ever, can help bridge this unfortunate gap in learning. Through proper experiential learning modules, students can expose themselves to all roles available. If created keeping the objectives and outcomes in mind, experiential learning modules can result in students having to communicate, think critically, collaborate and work on their interpersonal communication and experience team work.

CONCLUSIONS

The Discover India Program has over the years fulfilled several objectives from field immersion to understanding on-field research, from group building and team work to learning how to work within a limited budget and most importantly getting a holistic immersive experience. Based on David Kolb's four stages it is demonstrated that DIP does facilitate concrete experience and reflective observation on that experience through the visit to the field site, wherein students are not only exposed to a different geographical location, but have to navigate the geography, local culture and language (which may be different from their own). Throughout the travel and on-field engagement the students are encouraged to have journals or diaries to record their observations and incorporate these in their reflection essay to be submitted towards the end of the program. The entire experience can be challenging for students as well as the committee facilitating travel and research on such a large scale, however the experiential learning that students receive through this program is invaluable.

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A Bestiary in Masks
Creative Practices and Transdisciplinary Approaches to the Production of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT
Over the past few decades, arts-based research involving the use of creative practices has come to be accepted among transdisciplinary approaches to the production of knowledge. Exhibitions and symposia are some of the ways in which artists collaborate with scientists and researchers in other disciplines and can effectively be incorporated in the studio art course syllabus. *A Bestiary in Masks* is an example of how this can be done. The project was the culmination of a university travel seminar in which the student participants worked together with a small natural history research museum in Central Italy and a local ceramicist/sculptor to put on an exhibition of glazed terracotta animal masks that they had created during a week's residence in the artist's atelier. The seminar also involved intense work on the use of images and on how animals have been studied in the past and continue to be studied in our own era, thus producing a rich body of material for reflection on our current predicament in the Anthropocene era, and expanding the scope of the seminar through transdisciplinary and transhistorical research to raise social awareness for sustainability issues. As a learning experience, the bestiary project is an example of a model in which the journey (to real places as well as within oneself), hands-on experience (workshops and collaboration with institutions and artists), and consciousness raising enable learners to engage in arts-based research and, by discovering their "artist within", to learn to trust in and exercise their creative powers in producing knowledge.

KEY WORDS
Museum Pedagogy, Creative Practices, Arts-Based Research, Experiential Learning, Artist Within

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INTRODUCTION

Arts-based research involves using creative practices encompassing not only the visual arts, but also poetry, literature, crafts, and the performing arts in transdisciplinary approaches to the production of knowledge. There has been enormous growth and diversification in forms of arts-based research since the 1990s, with the appearance of educational theorist Elliot Eisner's first use of the term and art critic Nicolas Borriaud's work on relational aesthetics promulgating art as a form of living and action in existing reality. The multifaceted field employs the arts in various kinds of projects and applications, ranging from the most obvious in art education, to the more diverse, like exploring issues in health care or the social and behavioral sciences.[1] In this paper I present a studio art project, *A Bestiary in Masks*, an exhibition that was the final product of a ceramics travel seminar I taught in 2015 as part of the Academic Travel program at Franklin University Switzerland, with courses that integrate a period of travel as an experiential learning tool during a semester-long course. The travel destination, the professor's connection with it, and the activities undertaken there enrich the student's understanding of the subject matter of the course. The syllabus for my course, Studies in Ceramics, started on campus with basic hand building techniques, mastery of basic terminology, and preliminary research on the project to be undertaken during the travel period at mid-semester. The group then went to Central Italy, first to see MIC, the international museum of ceramics in Faenza, one of the world's largest, and to do a workshop on maiolica decoration. The high point of the travel part of the course was a week-long residence at La Fratta Art House in Marsciano in the province of Perugia, in the heart of terracotta territory, to produce the works for the final project, an exhibition to be shown at a nearby natural history museum, the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale in Casalina. Trips to nearby towns and monuments were interspersed with the art-making sessions. The trip ended with two nights in Milan for another ceramics workshop on slip glazes and visits to museums and monuments related to our project, most notably the Museum of Natural History, an imposing nineteenth-century building with terracotta decoration in the Neo-Romanesque and Gothic style and the largest collection of full-size dioramas in Italy.[2]

Central Italy was the chosen destination because of its ceramics centers like Faenza in Emilia and Marsciano in Umbria, the canonical monuments of Italian Renaissance art in Umbrian towns like Assisi, Orvieto, Perugia, and Spoleto, and the fact that many late twentieth century artists chose to live and work in that region. This latter aspect – artists traveling to Italy to live and work – ties in with one of the crucial goals of studio art courses, to speak to the "artist within." Hence, in this Academic Travel course focusing on studio art, the journey is not only to real places to learn more about art, but also within oneself, to discover one's own creative powers. The travel itinerary naturally included visits to the abovementioned art centers, but its central part, an artist-in-residence type of symposium, focused on the participants' experience as artists at work exploring the full range of the creative process, from the original idea for the work to the final exposition. Using a malleable, immediate medium like clay, and choosing this unusual exhibition venue, which contrasted with the "high art" we saw in museums or in city squares, enabled us to explore the history of art from the inside out and enhance each individual's creative experience. Travel was thus the culmination of a process which had already begun on campus before departure. Students were invited to step outside their habitual learning environment, the university art studio or the classroom, and go to well- and lesser-known centers of art and terracotta production not only to deepen their knowledge of new places, art collections and ceramics techniques, but more

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[1] For a concise survey of the field of arts-based research, see Janinka Greenwood (2019). See also in particular Gary Pearson (2013), Chemi and Du (2017) and Päivi Venäläinen (2012). Borriaud's and Eisner's works have become classics. See Nicolas Borriaud (2002), and Elliot Eisner (1998).

[2] MIC Faenza; Art-house, agriturismo e ceramica (corsiceramica.it); Informazioni - CAMS - Centro di Ateneo per i Musei Scientifici (unipg.it); Home - Museo di Storia Naturale - Comune di Milano (museodistorianaturalemilano.it)

importantly, to learn to use art as a means of investigation and research that values the senses, emotions, and ideas as well as cerebral, verbal, and linear/temporal approaches to acquiring and documenting knowledge.

In the course of this intense making process, a myriad of questions on the spirit of scientific investigation and our human condition were raised, and the choice of the natural history museum as our operations site constantly encouraged reflection on these matters. How can we go about investigating nature in today's digitized world, where studying animals no longer involves killing and embalming living creatures like naturalists did in the nineteenth century? How does being alive in the Anthropocene era and the availability of massive quantities of digitized research change our point of view towards knowledge and our relationship with the animal kingdom? As a group, we also questioned the role of institutions and raised concerns about the place of the artist and the scientist in society. In what ways can institutions involve contemporary artists in increasing the public's use of their collections and resources? Could museum collections be employed in more active ways, for example, through art making so that users might discover their own meaning and find new ways to convey their understanding to others?[3]

As an essential part of the creative process, participants recorded their thoughts as the project unfolded, thus the learning process leading up to the exhibition was artist-centered, where research, autobiographical experience and artistic practice mutually nourished each other. Theory on the subject visualizes the artist-centered process in various ways, for example, as concentric circles with the maker/artist at the innermost one. As the learner moves from personal, implicit knowledge through explicit, overt practices, the gyres widen, moving on to reflection, extracted meta-narrative and, finally, over-arching theory. The artist-centered process is a never-ending cycle, where the individual's personal knowledge base is enriched by acquiring and reframing knowledge, and engaging in the creative application and presentation of this knowledge, which returns to increase the personal knowledge base through an autobiographical process of reflection and documentation of the entire process (Rees 2013, see especially Figures 7.2 and 7.3, 123-24). In the context of Franklin's Academic Travel program, of which my travel seminar on ceramics is a part, acquiring and producing knowledge is truly artist-centered, and comes about not only in the lecture hall, laboratory, or art studio, or through the use of books, electronic resources and other library materials, but above all is lived through art and further enriched and deepened through on-site and hands-on experience.

PLACING CONTEMPORARY ART, TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND TRANSHISTORICAL EXHIBITION STRATEGIES AT THE HEART OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A Bestiary in Masks was the core project of a university studio art course in ceramics that involved a period of travel to central Italy to participate in a symposium resulting in the production of artworks to be shown in an exhibition at a local museum. It was conceived of as a collective contemporary art project which involved players on various levels: the students of the seminar, who were at the same time artists and researchers, the teacher, who also acted as artist/researcher/student, the master ceramicist/sculptor Luca Leandri, who had the multifaceted role of technical expert, artistic mentor, and liaison with the local museum where the exhibition was to be held and the staff of researchers and natural historians at the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale who shared their knowledge, facilitated our use of their collections, and made the museum available as an exhibition venue. In planning this exhibition of terracotta objects, the mask as the object to be produced as a three-dimensional version of the medieval bestiary and the natural history museum as the venue came about after careful considerations on opportunities for learning and producing knowledge.

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[3] On issues involved in art-science collaborations, see Shona K. Paterson et al. (2020).

Why clay and why that particular destination? For making and studying art, Umbria is ideal. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, the region is Italy's heart, geographically speaking, and it is also the cradle of the Early Italian Renaissance. But most importantly, it is clay. Over the years I have taken art-related travel seminars there because its wealth of cultural heritage encompasses the importance of the artisan's tradition in its huge ceramics centers like Deruta, or Marsciano, where the visitor is welcomed to the *territorio del laterizio*, or "brick territory." This explains what the *place* has to offer, but clay is also fundamental for the *self-discovery* part of our arts-based research. In almost every travel group, levels of exposure to making art are not homogeneous among enrolled students. In fact, some have never taken art courses before or tried making art, and some may even feel that making art works is beyond their reach since they have no creative talent whatsoever. Clay is an excellent medium because it is very direct, and can cut through many of the barriers beginners face when trying their hands at art for the first time. By contrast, in approaching drawing and painting, skills like perspective, chiaroscuro, and proportions are fundamental for achieving illusions of three-dimensions in the two-dimensional space of the support, but may overwhelm absolute or false beginners. Clay instead is immediately three-dimensional, "responsive to touch and very forgiving."[4] Clay appeals to our basic impulses – think of how children readily reach for clay and take delight in playing with it. The immediacy of clay makes it possible to build simple forms easily. It is malleable, so that when rolled out into a slab, virtually any object can become a mold to press the clay into or drape over. In fact, my past travel seminars' final projects were successful because slabs and molds were used, and that is why this particular hand-building technique was again chosen for the ceramics masks of the bestiary project.

And then, why the natural history museum? For years, I had been attracted by the idea of doing an art exhibition in an unusual setting, someplace which would involve the "displacement of cultural material from one location or context to another" (Potts 2012). Here, I had in mind such diverse works as Francis Alÿs's *The Nightwatch*, surveillance camera footage of a fox released into a museum or Alberto Garutti's *All'aperto*, an installation in Trivero (BI - Italy), where sculptural benches with seated dogs belonging to resident families are scattered throughout the small Italian town. Since 2010, I have expanded my activity to include sculpture and installations along with painting and the graphic arts. That year I was invited by curator Vittorio Tonon to participate in group shows of contemporary artists set up in the state archive of Novara as installations focusing on the interplay between the context of the archive building type and the theme of time and history. We still work together on multimedia projects. Later, I had a role in an installation/performance of my artist collaborator for the bestiary project, Luca Leandri, with his *Nozze d'arte*, a "marriage" between a patron and his acquired work of art, staged in a remote village church in Montelagello, Umbria.[5] Since then I have continued to work in a broad range of media.

When the opportunity to work together with my students at the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale materialized, I welcomed the opportunity as an experiment incorporating arts-based research in the liberal arts curriculum. By skewing traditional chronological or morphological arrangements, I could get the students to show their works together with the taxidermic specimens of different historical and cultural contexts, and use them to produce new insights and interpretations of the museum objects as well as to show their relation to the narratives specifically created in relation to them. Before the course, my collaborator Leandri and I spent a great deal of time brainstorming until we settled on the medieval bestiary as our genre. As a compendium of the animal world before modern taxonomy, the bestiary's short descriptive texts accompanied by images of real and imaginary animals in a union of "the natural and the scriptural" would allow us to merge artistic, literary and "scientific" genres to play around

[4] More Than Just Clay - The Importance of Clay With Child Development (lakesidepottery.com)

[5] For Alys's work, see Francis Alÿs: (francisalys.com); for Garutti's, see Il cane qui ritratto appartiene a una delle famiglie di Trivero. Quest'opera è dedicata a loro e alle persone che sedendosi qui ne parleranno | Alberto Garutti; for Leandri, see NOZZE D'ARTE, catalogo 2012 by La Fratta art-house - Issuu..

with different disciplines and ultimately reflect on the relations between human and animal life (Mathews 2020, 3). The appeal of the bestiary in the arts has endured through the ages. Modern and contemporary artists and writers have revisited the genre and adapted it to their purposes. Consider Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's lithographs for Jules Renard's *Histoires naturelles*, Raoul Dufy's woodcut illustrations to Guillaume's Apollinaire's *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*, Graham Sutherlands's portfolio of the same name, or Jorge Luis Borges's *Book of Imaginary Beings*. Musical versions abound, from Gabriel Fauré to Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, and Francis Poulenc.[6] With its characteristic "tension between inventory and imagination" (Nicholson 2020), part manual of classification and part anthology of myths and legends, the bestiary enabled us to exploit that tension by placing artistically constructed, fanciful representations of animals side-by-side with preserved scientific specimens of real animals in a "gallery" of natural history. Thus working with transforming this genre into a sculptural work was ideal for a project in which student/artists at a liberal arts university could do conventional research on animals using library and digital resources, but at the same time have an ample margin of leeway for subjective interpretations and personal narrative.

Collaborating with the University of Perugia's museum researchers and curators was particularly fruitful. Guided by the mission statement of the institution to be a "collection for everybody" and an "archive of biodiversity" (Barili et al. 2010, 23-28), their strong commitment to sustainability and inclusion as well as their enthusiasm about expanding disciplinary borders and hosting our project further stimulated us. Furthermore, opening the museum at its present location was an act of social outreach as it is in a refurbished building complex that formerly served as tobacco warehouses. It thus plays a role in reforging the identity and economy of a territory that was once based on single-crop agriculture while also fostering a sense of the local inhabitants' sense of responsibility for their cultural heritage, for biodiversity, and for the environment.

This characteristic of the museum site also ties in with my choice of Umbria for an Academic Travel course location – the building itself can be savored together with the specimens it houses. Instead of demolishing old structures or eradicating signs of a place's past life, a creative approach of re-use has been adopted to give them another life. What once provided livelihood for a small community plays a new role as guardian of its cultural heritage. The collections are conceived of as a gallery more than a museum, and this is reflected in the its name, *Galleria di storia naturale*. Small and intimate, it encompasses the legacies of different local "collectors" of animal specimens in addition to the main bequest from a nineteenth century Perugian naturalist Orazio Antinori. Visiting these collections is by no means a passive experience, and the element of drama and spectator participation played a part in my enthusiasm about working with the museum for this project. The exhibits begin with a display that, in presenting the animal kingdom in all its variety, is at the same time a plea to protect biodiversity. The building plan has a corridor situated around a central core, and the displays are situated in these two areas according to historiographic criteria. In the corridor, or "outer ring", the animals are not exhibited in glass cases or dioramas, but are in sections organized according to geographical region, with no barrier between them and the viewer (Figure 1). The tour proceeds in a circle, moving around the peripherical corridor first, where the gallery aspect of the displays deliberately recalls another era in the history of science, the Renaissance *Wunderkammer*. The climax of the tour is the second part, when the museum staff open up the inner core of the museum, a dark, refrigerated storage cell where very fragile specimens are kept in cases and drawers. It also houses more "classic" displays of taxidermic specimens in glass-encased cabinets that deliberately recall late nineteenth and early twentieth century natural history museum installations (Figure 2). After entering the dark chamber with only the glassed-in cabinets illuminated, the lights are turned on and visitors are encouraged by the museum staff to open the cabinets and cases to learn more about the specimens they contain.

[6] See especially Sarah Kay's concise summary (2020, 36-38). For a more comprehensive treatment of the subject, see McCulloch (1960) and Baxter (1992).

Adding an element of drama to the museum tour heightened students' interest in the collections – something that could only come about through on-site learning.

Figure 1: A student/artist poses with his animal mask in the outer corridor of the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG), where specimens are displayed in a "gallery" – free of dioramas and glass cases. Reproduced with kind permission from the gallery.

Figure 2: The inner room of the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG). Reproduced with kind permission from the gallery.

The threefold rationale behind this type of display meshed well with the aims of our course: to enable visitors to perceive biodiversity at a glance, to allow users to concentrate on their own knowledge production in an informal way, and finally, to preserve something of the nature of past scholarship. What is more, the gallery not only presents its collections and makes them accessible to everyone, but also presents itself as an object of study in the history of museum studies and a unique type of museum experience. In addition to the permanent collections, temporary exhibitions are also installed in the museum to complement the permanent collections. At the time of our visit, the gallery was hosting a temporary exhibition of contemporary African Tingatinga painting, which added a pleasantly disruptive note to the taxidermic displays by showing the paintings next to the animals they represented. The paintings also provided an additional opportunity for the bestiary project participants to see how a different culture represents animals and to enhance their knowledge of world contemporary art (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: Considering installation options for a mask inspired by the displays on primates at the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG). The option on the far right best exploits transhistorical display by showing the student/artist's mask next to the taxidermy specimens and a Tingatinga painting. Reproduced with kind permission from the artist and the gallery.

Figure 4: Two student/artists posing with their works at the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG). On the left, the artist stands with his mask inspired by Tingatinga painting. Reproduced with kind permission from the artists and the gallery.

THE SPIRIT OF INVESTIGATION AND THE USE OF INSTITUTIONS: LEARNING FROM HISTORICAL ARTWORKS THROUGH THE LENS OF CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRODUCTION AND VICE-VERSA

> *How do you attract a consumer? And how do you attract a learner? In both cases the answer can be spectacle … museums should fire our imaginations.* (Asma 2003, 45)

These questions are of particular importance for today's museums and institutions of higher learning, natural history museums in particular, and through this project we became actors in this debate.[7] Nearly thirty years ago, The International Symposium for the Preservation and Conservation of Natural History Collections identified the role of their collections thus: "[They] must serve the broader purpose of encouraging understanding among peoples and of the world around us. Nature conservation is an issue about people – us – as much as it is about other animals and plants" (Griffin 1992). Our collaboration with the University of Perugia's gallery of natural history had these higher aims. *A Bestiary in Masks* was born of the desire to interact with the museum collections by creating tensions on various levels. First of all, the project grappled with the tensions between the real, observed world of science and the (sur)real, imaginary world of the artist by embracing a genre where the natural merges with the scriptural, or better, where the scientist who compiles an inventory of animals is also Adam the first human who gives them names, or Orpheus the poet who charms them with his music (Mathews 2020, 4; Kay 2020, 36-39). Just as the compliers of the colorful bestiaries of the Middle Ages mixed legend with fact, the student/artists who made the animal masks also wrote about their chosen animals.[8] The *Wunderkammer* type of arrangement of the University of Perugia's natural history gallery and the freedom granted to us as user/artists certainly did "fire our imaginations." The nineteenth century collections on display were assembled and studied in a completely different spirit than the medieval bestiary, but the study of natural history in the nineteenth century was nonetheless enveloped in an aura of the exotic. Early taxonomy was driven by fascination with new species and the desire to make them known to the public. The aims of the expeditions of Charles Darwin, his Perugian contemporary Orazio Antinori, and other nineteenth century naturalists share something of their medieval predecessors' sense of wonderment at the marvels of nature.

Secondly, tensions are also caused by the nature of museum collections, art-making, and our sense of time. With their dioramas and posed stuffed animals, traditional museums of natural history might be seen as static rather than dynamic environments. However, museum resources could also become essential elements to artistic inspiration, as they were in our bestiary project where the student/artists were granted unmediated access to an archive of biodiversity. In our case, the curators and researchers that we worked with became active partners in this creative endeavor as we all – student/artists, museum collaborators, the artist mentor, and myself – dealt with fundamental questions that all fields of knowledge grapple with: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?" Science is concerned with observing, investigating and recording the real world; the artist observes, investigates and records in order to go beyond the real world. In the bestiary project, our diverse ways of working merged in a common goal of knowledge production.

Since the 1990s, a considerable body of literature on exhibition strategies and knowledge production in art museums has emerged. In a recent article, Emilie Sitzia uses George Hein's fourfold model of educational theories to explore the kind of knowledge production happening in art museums, outlining four models based on the extent to which they involve knowledge existing outside the learner or the extent to which the learner personally and socially constructs

[7] Besides Asma (2003), see also, from the vast literature on the subject, Chen, Ho and Ho (2006) and Dillenburg (2000).

[8] A link to the small catalog of the masks can be downloaded here: https://sites.google.com/view/claricezdanski2/home/texts-to-download.

knowledge.[9] To briefly summarize, in the didactic/expository model, history (of art, of the sciences or otherwise) is a driving discipline, and museums show and tell while visitors watch and learn (cognitive learning); in the stimulus/response model, engagement and creativity is the stimulus, and museums show and prompt visitors to feel, do and learn (interpretation skills and emotional knowledge); in the discovery model, reflection and problems generate knowledge as museums show visitors how to think and learn (critical skills); in the constructivist model, the museum seeks to build knowledge in the visitor, who becomes the major knowledge producer (the self-generative aspect of knowledge production) and the museum staff play an advisory role. Rightly recognizing that no single model can cover the whole range of knowledge production, Sitzia (2016) adds a fifth category, hybrid models.

With respect to *A Bestiary in Masks*, it is interesting to note that the examples of learner engagement offered in Sitzia's article do not take the production of artwork – our major aim – into consideration. The example for the didactic/expository model, the Centre Pompidou's different ways of presenting modern collections (1905-1965) over the years, was concerned with modes of display, while to illustrate the stimulus-response approach, the Art Gallery of Ontario experiment with audio programs designed to stimulate viewers' interpretations of individual paintings was cited. Ways of employing the discovery model included the active, hands-on children's programs developed by science museums. The example cited for the constructivist model, the closest to our partnership with the Galleria di storia naturale, was the "DIY Archive: Make your own exhibition" of the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, The Netherlands). Like our project, visitors were permitted to work in the museum's stockroom/archive area to pick works from the racks, do research on them, and curate a temporary display of their chosen works. Unlike ours, this project did not involve artistic creation or transdisciplinary research. With its transhistorical emphasis and transformative engagement with museum collections (research as a part of the creative process), *A Bestiary in Masks* went a step further, showing that creating artworks can be effective as a manifestation of empirical knowledge and a means of creating meaningful partnerships in art-science collaboration.

Figure 5: New identities for the animals on display in the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG). Reproduced with kind permission from the artists and the gallery.

[9] Sitzia (2016) borrows the theoretical framework from Hein (1998, 3).

Figure 6: Which is the specimen and which is the mask? Artists' masks installed (or hidden?) among the specimens on display in the Galleria di Storia Naturale, Casalina (PG). Reproduced with kind permission from the artists and the gallery.

By opening its collections to us working artists and art students, the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale brought about a sort of "metamorphosis of the museum"[10] by agreeing to be part of a project concerned with creating living forms through art rather than preserving dead ones (Figures 5 and 6). If in the past museums have seemed boring or out of touch with the general public, perhaps it is because they have been too sectorial, too specialized, too analytical, and too static. *A Bestiary in Masks* was designed to encourage playfulness, discovery, interaction, and creating something new rather than the passive sufferance of well-organized specimens. In a certain sense, it was intended as "edutainment", where education and entertainment find common ground in the territory of the spectacular (Asma 2003, 37, 45). With the rise of virtual reality and the ready availability of most of the world's great collections on our hand-held devices anywhere or on our ultra-wide screens at home, today's museum users may be seeking a more direct kind of gratification (Rourke and Rees 2013, 151-54). The experience of making an art object inspired by a prolonged period of research and exposure to museum collections could provide a level of personal engagement intense enough to "fire our imaginations" and keep our interest burning for a long while (Asma 2003, 45; see also Zdanski 2015). Moreover, institutions could give their users access to systems where they could "assemble their own experiences" or begin to construct a "visual autobiography", so that enriching the user's own experience becomes as much a part of the museum as its collections or its bookstore (Chen 2006, 1; see also Rees 2013). With student/artists involved in the bestiary project, using their acquired skills in working with clay and drawing upon the research carried out with the museum collections as well as their own psyche for inspiration to produce the exhibition, this experience made a deep, lasting mark. Discovering "the artist within" was also inextricably bound up with the realization that artistic production demands exploration of one's inner and outer worlds, and that this soul-searching process is a unique way to acquire and convey knowledge:

> The skilled experience that leads to making new things is grounded in self-knowledge: somatic, procedural, intellectual, imaginative, and even revealed…two kinds of empirical knowledge [are] involved in making artifacts: understanding the world we believe to be outside ourselves, and the knowledge we derive of ourselves as a result. (Butters 2014, 61)

Here perhaps it might be best to let two of my former students speak on the enduring benefits of this kind of learning. In a recent email from one of them, who is now going to undertake a Masters in Irish Folklore and Celtic Studies after a few years' break to "find herself", learning through the arts made all the difference in this, her charting out her life path (A. Phillips, personal communication, July 20, 2022):

> I remember in your classes, I had the perfect, at least in my mind, ratio of art and anthropology. I actually did a little research, on the side lines, to get the story from each painting, sculpture, or object because it interested me that much. It just made me so happy to learn from you because I found that your classes challenged me in

[10] The term "metamorphosis of the museum" came up during Leandri's and my preliminary brainstorming sessions for the bestiary project. Some of the other ideas for this project included "fossils of the future" (art works imagining how future museum-goers might see our present-day civilization) and "Metamorphoses" (inspired by Ovid's great work). With the bestiary, the three-way collaboration between two artists (myself and Leandri), the museum staff and researchers, and the students was very productive and rewarding. Based on that positive experience, another project/exhibition was organized when the course was offered again in the following year, with the zoomorphic vessel as our object of investigation in an exhibit entitled *A Banquet of Metamorphoses*. See also Sitzia (2016, 153-55) on ways that museums might "metamorphose" and on going further with hybrid models and "ignorant museums."

> the best way possible … you helped to inspire me to grow more through learning, listening, and of course, creating art. That, in and of itself, meant so much to me.

Another response is taken from a paper assigned at the end of a summer course on art in the regions around Ticino, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland where Franklin University Switzerland is located. It took advantage of the condensed summer course schedule to stay out of the classroom and visit as many places as possible, in favor of site-based, hands-on learning. What this student valued most about the course methodology was the importance of seeing for oneself, forming one's own judgements, and becoming the artist where possible:

> …art is not what is seen in frames, power point presentations, and lectures. Art is what is truly experienced by the viewer herself. Without the person to truly experience the work of art, to feel in her soul the meaning of the piece, to give it a unique and valuable expression, art dies. And without art, in truth, the human soul dies, without a means to express the inexpressible. Art is not the enforceable, the mandated, the dictated litany of what "should" be beautiful and great, but rather the personal experience of what it means when art is those characteristics to the human. Art should not be rendered an indigestible meal that is supposedly "good for you" [it is instead] a rare delicacy... To truly keep art alive, the human must go and see the works, finding her own path and becoming partial artist. (in Zdanski 2015, 51)

Again, this is the great advantage of on-site, hands-on learning. In Umbria, we had the opportunity to study "what 'should' be beautiful and great", but our chosen medium as clay and exhibition venue as the natural history museum also let us see this unmandated side of art history.

"HIGH" AND "LOW" ART

Clay has traditionally been at the low end of the hierarchy of the fine arts, a humble material relegated to the ranks of "craft", "applied art", or "minor art" because it is used in the preparatory and project phases of finished works of art sculpture (models and molds for casting in more noble materials like bronze) or because of its primarily functional purpose. The dioramas and taxidermy specimens of the natural history museum, too, might have even occupied a lower place. Yet this is precisely what attracted my Umbrian collaborator and myself to the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale:

> The natural history museum is a place where the line between "high" and "low" culture effectively vanishes, where our awe of nature, our taste for the bizarre, and our thirst for knowledge all blend happily together.[11]

Contemporary curatorial practices often promote the erasure of boundaries and encourage exchange and "contamination" between the place of the exhibition, the art exhibited, the artist and the viewer.[12] The bestiary project was set up to enable students/artists to act as contemporary

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[11] Asma (2003), back cover excerpt from *The Voice Literary Supplement* review. On high vs low art, see Fisher (2005).

[12] The extent to which this philosophy has pervaded the field of curating is clear in the graduate projects from the MA program in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art in London: https://www.rca.ac.uk/study/schools/school-of-arts-humanities/cca/cca-exhibitions/. For exhibits or projects with "contamination" between art and science, see the SciArt Initiative at the link http://www.sciartinitiative.org/culture-of-contamination.html or the high-tech Art-Science workshops organized by the Holst Centre and Baltan Laboratories in Eindhoven:

agents not only by creating works of art, but also by organizing an exhibition of them, which is another form of experiential learning. The criteria for the production of these works and the choice of the exhibition venue at this "gallery" of natural history embraced the idea of "contamination", starting with the choice of the bestiary as the genre to work with, and extending through to our exploration of ceramics, a medium that was once classified as a "minor", "decorative", or "applied" art (like manuscript illustration, or in fact taxidermy)[13] in order to make masks (art forms from artisanal or ethnographic tradition), and show them in a science museum. Our undertaking expanded on this dualism in intellectual and artistic genres by questioning and even poking fun at more conventional ideas of the art work. The extreme realism characteristic of scientific taxidermy employed in dioramas or the wax sculpture of wax museums are hardly accepted by the Western European artistic canon as high art. To cite one example, in his volume on painting from the High Renaissance until the end of the sixteenth century (hence one of the high points of the classical tradition), Sydney J. Freedburg discusses a distinct religious architectural complex, the *sacro monte*, or Sacred Mountain, which features life-size colored terracotta sculptures arranged in theatrical painted settings in chapels dedicated to episodes from the life of Christ. For Freedburg, they were "not conceived of as works of art in the developed sixteenth century sense", but as art whose "sole use was to recreate the utmost that it could of reality…identical in kind to and purpose to what waxworks, or the dioramas of a natural history museum, are today" (1979, 393).

The sacred mountains of Northern Italy might seem a far cry from Central Italy's ceramics industry or artistic monuments, but I actually got the idea for an academic travel seminar while I was studying the *sacro monte* – to do a course on terracotta sculpture, or the anti-academic, reality-seeking medium par excellence as it has always been considered a baser material than marble or bronze in statuary and used in such situations as the sacred mountains where drama and extreme realism carry the message. The original idea for the course has undergone many transformations, but when I stumbled upon La Fratta Art House while in Umbria for my own enjoyment, I was overjoyed at finding a place where I could give students the opportunity to see the Renaissance in the making by visiting famous monuments firsthand, like Assisi's basilica of San Francesco, Orvieto's cathedral or Perugia's Fontana Maggiore or paintings by Perugino and the young Raphael. I could also try to get them to understand that the Renaissance was more than Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo. It changed our idea of what artists are and how they learn to make art, and forged a tradition in art and the territory that attracted the attention of artists for centuries to come. And this could also be experienced first-hand in places like Città di Castello, where Alberto Burri left his legacy, and Todi, where Beverly Pepper left hers, and Spoleto, "home" to several renowned artists of the late twentieth century like Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, and Sol Lewitt. Finally, they could try it out, in a medium that makes it possible to start immediately and get results, but that teaches respect for the crafting aspect of the arts, since making sculpture in clay requires proceeding with great care and by degrees.

Thus, Freedburg's distinction between creating "art in the developed sixteenth century sense" and art that recreates the utmost that it can of reality is key to understanding our project. In terms of creative process, the student/artists of the bestiary project worked in a traditional way, using the specimens in the University of Perugia's natural history "gallery" as if they were plaster casts or live models in an art academy. They went to the museum for inspiration, working in the most academic way possible with preserved animals in order to produce a popular art form – the mask – in an "applied", "craft" medium, ceramics. Indeed, the line between high and low culture was blurred as the student/artists' animal masks met criteria to qualify as works of "high art." In terms of content, they were true to life and aimed for genuine emotional experience. As form, they

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http://digicult.it/news/contamination-and-experimentation-an-art-science-workshop-series/

[13] On these art forms, see "Applied Art" in the Cork Visual Arts *Encyclopedia of Art*, online at Applied Art: Definition, Meaning (visual-arts-cork.com) or for the place of ceramics in the "hierarchy of the arts", see Gray (2011), Gray (2012), Risatti (2007) and Rowley (1997).

were organic wholes, aesthetically valuable objects of appreciation. Each mask was created by a single artist working under the direction of mentors or collaborators concerned with forwarding skills and knowledge and assisting with the achievement of formal cohesion in the project. Everyone's intention was to engage the intellect, to convey a message of social importance, and to arouse aesthetic appreciation (Fisher 2005, 476-77).

Developments in late twentieth century art and art theory have made it possible to expand our idea of what art is. Stuffed animals have appeared in displaced contexts as early as the late 1950s, with Robert Rauschenberg *Monogram*, one of the first works of art to use taxidermy "with an unprecedented critical awareness designed to destabilize the viewer's anthropocentric standpoint." Curator and author Giovanni Aloi sees the current emergence of taxidermy in contemporary art as a natural continuation of the "ontological derailments" of early twentieth century art movements like cubism, Dadaism, or surrealism, which used gallery space to connect with the outside world in previously unexplored ways. Taxidermy goes beyond artistic trends and theories to embody larger issues ranging from the biopolitical to the posthuman and the anthropogenic, to reach the higher aim of rethinking our current relationship with animals, the environment, biopower, capitalism and perception through art (Aloi 2018, 34). Working in the natural history museum automatically invited us to think about these issues as we of course had in mind the use of embalmed animals in such famous contemporary works as Damien Hirst's shark in formaldehyde, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* and the controversy surrounding it.[14] Thus, *A Bestiary in Masks* demonstrates how institutions of learning may benefit from collaboration with contemporary artists, by creating and participating in cross-disciplinary projects using art practice as a means to acquire and convey knowledge. Indeed, a few years later, I was pleased to see how our exhibition was very much like a later one in 2017 by contemporary Chinese artist Ai Weiwei in the Zoology Room in the Lausanne Museum of Fine Arts, where the artist's works were ingeniously dispersed among the museum objects and installations, or even in some cases camouflaged by them.[15] We actively engaged with the collections at the Galleria di Storia Naturale while inviting viewers and everyone involved in the project to reflect on our current predicament in the Anthropocene Era. As Aloi also points out:

> …artistic parameters are also being shifted in the light of the undeniable awareness that contemporary art offers a unique opportunity to unhinge anthropocentric certainties within a productive, experimental, and inclusive space, one that transcends the limitations imposed by disciplinary boundaries. (2018, 29)

BROADENING HORIZONS IN LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION THROUGH ARTS-BASED RESEARCH FAVORING ON-SITE, HANDS-ON PRACTICES

A Bestiary in Masks shows how a vital relationship can be instilled between the different agendas or functions of the natural history museum and contemporary artistic practice. As is clear in the intent of the University of Perugia's Galleria di Storia Naturale to be both a "collection for everybody" and an "archive of biodiversity", the academic work of collecting and analyzing specimens is a function that directly nourishes another museum function, namely, making the public more sensitive to biodiversity and environmental issues. In allowing the student/artists involved in the bestiary project to carry out their work of research and exhibition on the museum premises, they contributed to a new, regenerative role for the institution: producing new life from preserved life; speculating about what the "fossils of the future" might be. Our work there had

[14] See "An Interview with Damien Hirst," http://www.damienhirst.com/tests/1996/jan--stuart-morgan.
[15] Ai Weiwei's exhibition in the Zoology Room section was part of a larger exhibit *D'ailleurs d'est toujours les autres* installed in the Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts in Lausanne in 2017: https://www.mcba.ch/expositions/ai-weiwei-dailleurs-cest-toujours-les-autres/. See also Paterson et al. (2020, 1-4).

given rise to a profound meditation on humankind's place in the world – especially with respect to animals – and how to study nature in today's digitized, Anthropocene Era. The medieval bestiary authors' curiosity about the world was mixed with sense of wonderment, myth and legend before the scientific, cataloguing generation of Buffon came to the fore. The generation of Humboldt, Darwin and Antinori sailed to the ends of the earth to find new species and to gather physical evidence for their theories. What is left for us to do in today's world, where not only can we travel to their places relatively easily, but also even more easily access all their work by simply touching a device held in the palms of our hands? Isn't the fact that Darwin and Antinori went to such great lengths to study nature an acknowledgement of the value of on-site and hands-on experience in learning? Can museums still "fire our imaginations"? Can art and science join forces to encourage a greater sense of sustainability and sensitivity to all living things?

With projects like ours, the answer to these questions is yes. We made a worthy attempt by traveling through historical eras and disciplines that are radically different among themselves to forge a meaningful transdisciplinary partnership and produce a collective contemporary art project in response to a particular place and the knowledge production that happened in that place. On the institutional level, *A Bestiary in Masks* produced fresh insights into the workings of our entrenched historical presumptions, and opened up space to reassess interpretations of individual objects in relation to their contexts and narratives. From the point of view of the artist/students who used the collections, the project gave them the opportunity to enrich their knowledge of natural history and environmental issues, but more importantly, by acting through the arts, self-knowledge and self-discovery were inextricably bound up with it.

Figure 7: The last day of the project. *A Bestiary in Masks* was designed to encourage play, discovery and interaction rather than passive sufferance of well-organized specimens. Reproduced with kind permission from the artists and the gallery.

One last photograph (Figure 7) shows all of the participants at the end of the project, in a short performance on the museum premises during which the student/artists posed with their masks and animals – artists and their artworks became one.[16] Upon finishing, all of the different actors felt a sense of euphoria at having achieved our goals on various levels: student/artists who may have been discovering creative abilities for the first time or deepening what was already there; the artist/mentor whom I met with for long hours of brainstorming and inspiration and who supervised the technical parts of the project; the museum curators and researchers who embraced the project as coherent with their aims and as having potential to enrich their outreach programs; myself as artist/student/teacher in this transhistorical, transdisciplinary project employing arts-based research and hands-on creative practices enabled by the outer and inner journey as valid means of acquiring and conveying knowledge.

The enjoyment of working together as art forms and practices interconnect with bodies of knowledge across multiple time periods and multiple disciplines is an aim I have strived for over the years in these travel seminars. Travel to Central Italy with its wealth of artistic traditions, forms the ideal backdrop for "edutainment", where active, arts-based research is the means of opening broader horizons for humanities and liberal arts education. As a learning experience, the bestiary project is an example of a model in which the journey to real places as well as within oneself, hands-on experience through workshops and collaboration with institutions and artists, and consciousness raising enable learners to engage in arts-based research and, by discovering their "artist within", learn to trust in and exercise their creative powers in producing knowledge. Like the expedition members in René Daumal's *Mount Analogue*, in today's world where even the highest peaks of the Himalayas are no longer considered inaccessible, we set out on a two-tiered journey towards a symbolic frontier – the quest for one's creative self – as we made our way through lands where artists and travelers have meandered for centuries, and by making and studying art in the heart of Italy, we found "a visible door to the invisible" (Daumal 1974, 42).

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[16] The sense of enjoyment we felt while working together on this project comes through in a short video presentation created by Elisabetta Corrao, owner and director of La Fratta Art House. It is available at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2njBw8NXXfw

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BIOGRAPHY

Clarice Zdanski is an artist, art educator, art historian, writer, and translator. She currently holds the position of Instructor in Art History and Studio Art at Franklin University Switzerland. Her academic degrees include an MA and PhD in the History of Art (University of Chicago), a BFA in Painting and Printmaking (UNC-Greensboro), an Italian university degree in modern languages (IULM-Feltre, Italy), and a Diploma in music (Conservatorio G. Cantelli, Novara, Italy). Her research work in art history, which ranges from the Italian Renaissance to art and travel in late nineteenth century Europe to current practices in art and art education, has always been concerned with how art is studied and its place in society. She is a regular participant in art symposia, most recently the International Symposium of Socially Engaged Art in Finland (ISEAS Finland). She has published in scholarly journals and websites, and her artwork is in private and public collections in Europe and the USA. A multi-faceted artist, she loves to experiment with different media. She is also active as a musician and belongs to various organizations and ensembles in Milan and Europe. Find out more about her work on
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Walking Through the Art Histories Classroom: Movement and Pedagogies

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ABSTRACT
In 2019 we initiated a new postgraduate art history course, in the School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. The course had co-productive goals: first, to respond to the ongoing calls for decolonized higher education curricula in our shared fields of visual and cultural studies; and second, to explore how the teaching and learning approaches loosely grouped under "walking pedagogies" might facilitate this curricular redesign and reimagining. In this paper, we present the successes, failures, and our ambivalences about the course as an example of collaborative and participatory methods in the visual arts. Furthermore, we see this peripatetic movement as a kind of "academic travel" in that it is a form of critical pedagogy involving experiential learning premised on movement into and across new environments and unfamiliar spaces outside the classroom. At the same time, it allows for an extension of the ways in which collaborative teaching practice happens, and a way to expand the expectations of the discipline. Originally we had envisioned the course as a way of contesting the multi-stranded sources of epistemic authority operating in the traditional art history classroom responding to the call for the decolonization of the South African higher education curriculum. As such we began to "walk-with" participants, landscapes (entrenched in settler colonial histories), contemporary arts-based practices, sensory enquiry and affect. In practice, participants found unanticipated sites of resistance, productive disruptions, and electrifying new directions. These included grappling with the manifold, unthought-of entanglements of pedagogic actors (human and otherwise) that arise when the landscape is not treated as a bounded object of analysis, contained by set curricula and examples. The calls to unsettle entrenched dominant Western narratives as part of the work of any decolonial project asks us to revisit our own assumptions about the ways in which the visual is privileged as a way of teaching and knowing. This, we argue, is a departure for a course in art history.

KEY WORDS
Walking, Decolonized Curriculum, Critical Pedagogies, Visual and Cultural Studies

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019 we initiated a new course. Under the mantle of a postgraduate Postcolonial Art History course, we had two interacting goals: first, to respond to the ongoing calls for decolonized higher education curricula (Booysen 2016; Heleta 2016; Naidoo 2016) in our shared fields of visual and cultural studies; and second, to explore how the teaching and learning approaches loosely grouped under "walking pedagogies" (Springgay and Truman 2019) might facilitate this curricular redesign and reimagining. In this approach walking operated as both pedagogy and research methodology and allowed students to consider the historical, sociological and post/de-colonial approaches to reading, understanding and (de)constructing art histories today, especially as they are experienced within the landscapes of South Africa.

We see this peripatetic movement as a kind of "academic travel" in that it is a form of critical pedagogy involving experiential learning premised on movement into and across new environments and unfamiliar spaces outside the classroom. At the same time, it allows for an extension of the ways in which collaborative teaching practice happens and a way to expand the expectations of the discipline. One of the animating questions for this special edition: "What makes academic travel different from other forms of travel?" is one that we return to in our own research practices, responses to students' questions, and conceptualizing curriculum choices in terms of learning outcomes. What, if anything, makes walking as part of this course different from walking for pleasure, for health, in protest, as a parade, or as part of a daily commute (or any of the myriad other reasons that we walk)? In this paper, we present some of the answers we have discovered through an exploration of our successes, failures and ambivalences about the course as an example of collaborative and participatory methods in the visual arts.

EXPERIENCING LANDSCAPE: WALKING AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES

Walking pedagogies share many of the same aims as critical pedagogic practices in that they seek to offer an ethical and political call to action from their respective participants (Springgay and Truman 2019) and extend the opportunities for dialogue to produce a "radical democratic imaginary...where embodied knowledge, experience and memories are shared, that advances innovations in biographical, visual/performative methods and critical pedagogy" (O'Neill and Einashe 2019, 32). We consider Sandra Styres' proposition of land as more than a physical or geographical place, that it is "a space (abstract) and place/land (concrete); it is also conceptual, experiential, relational, and embodied" (2018, 27), as motivation for engaging with walking pedagogies. Being outside of the classroom, employing movement, and walking enables a reciprocal study and consideration of the landscape; one that also allows for the development and extension of reciprocity in the newly constituted learning environments.

Styres' focus on reciprocity and relationships is central to her work with "indigeneity" and "indigenous contexts" in which cultural positionalities and their relationship to place are vital for the ways in which decolonial praxis can be incorporated into pedagogical practices. Her chapter offers insights and practical examples of how one might actively engage with decolonial praxis and notes the need to engage critically and purposefully with "the tensions, challenges and resistances of locating and positioning Land with a capital 'L' within classrooms" (Styres 2018, 25). We have taken up this focus on reciprocity in our attempts to shift the power relations within how the course is structured and offered with varying degrees of success.

Until approximately three decades ago the discipline of art history was extremely Eurocentric and focused almost exclusively on the historiography of what it considered as high art. The subsequent inclusion of postmodern and postcolonial theories saw a shift in focus with the opening of scope to include a range of images, theories and methodologies from other fields within the humanities and social sciences. Similar multidisciplinary developments have occurred within the study of geography during this time – for example the shifts in geographic reasoning,

which saw space as being constructed as a "container", or blank slate on which activity takes place, now includes the recognition of space being inextricably entangled with, informing and being informed by activity. Similarly, we have leaned on the shift in engagement with landscapes that archaeologist Christopher Tilley (1994) describes as a move from an abstracted, "scientific" space towards a meaning-laden or "humanized" space. This former approach, according to Tilley, was convenient in that it provided a "scale" which facilitated quantitative measurement of the landscape and activity within it. The resulting spatial approach to human impact and involvement with the landscape was effectively reduced to a series of independent layers, which could be overlaid as needed, then removed, resulting in a sanitized representation in which human contact at any point and in any context was merely the inscription left by a transient friction.

Tilley attempts to remediate this by suggesting rather a "sedimentary layering" (1994, 15) of forms of space, these being:

1. Somatic space
2. Perceptual space
3. Existential space
4. Architectural space
5. Cognitive space

These sedimentations undergo constant slippage and they are rarely in perfect alignment. With this in view, the course provides students with opportunities to select which of these layers they are engaging with, and to "pin" them together and to the landscape through their practical, discursive, or aesthetic interventions. We find a compelling metaphor to explain this action in Lacan's "point de capiton", or "quilting point", the point at which "the signifier adheres to the signified" (Larsson 2020). Lacan (1993) writes that this is "the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in the discourse to be situated retroactively and retrospectively." In much the same way as Tilley and Styres refuse the idea of the landscape as a blank, neutral or empty space, we do not consider the choice of a walking pedagogy as a neutral vector for course content.

Perhaps some examples would be illustrative at this point. In the 2019 cohort, one student, a young woman, indicated during the orientation meeting that she had no experience at all of walking or hiking. This was not extraordinary since the course made provision for all levels of experience. Later, as we all came to know each other it became apparent that far from having no experience with walking she walked several kilometers every day to catch her transport, and as she navigated the often hostile and dangerous cityscape between station and campus. For another student, the mountains and valleys of the Eastern Free State we explored in long hikes on our field trip were deeply evocative of cherished times that she had spent with her grandmother walking substantial distances in a similar landscape going about the routines of rural daily life. A final example was the running gag amongst the group on an isolated hillside on the border between South Africa and Lesotho where mobile phone alerts went off repeatedly every few steps as we were alternatively welcomed and bid farewell from South Africa by the mobile service providers.

These rather prosaic moments, memories and insights emerged during the process of walking and talking and talking about walking. As a group, when reflecting on the day's experiences they came up multiple times, and in some cases were developed through extended projects. Similarly, as we have reflected on the course we have started to explore them as vignettes that had significance: that these "quilting points" were something special to pay attention to as pedagogical moments. That to walk through the city daily but to not recognize oneself in the figure of the *flaneur* pins together the discourses of crime, gender, race and the particular history of place and (not) belonging. That to have experienced deep and formative pleasure in long walks learning about land and the life on it but to not recognize oneself in the practice of hiking, sutured together discussions about South Africa's ossified presuppositions about race and gender and leisure: what recreation looks like and what labor looks like in the same landscape. That the intrusions of mobile

phone alerts provided an aural re-mapping on to the landscape of settler-colonial borders, boundaries, and ideas of nationhood taken over by neoliberal capital's incessant "courtesies" vying for attention.

In short, we see cultivating the idea of these unpredictable and unplanned "quilting points" as an active intervention. They are determined by the confluence of place, people, histories and coincidence. They are both a choice and provocation to students to work towards determining what their own priority will be that will then act as the point that they use to pin through or quilt together the layers that the landscape affords. This is a departure from the traditional ways in which landscape or even postcolonial art theories are taught within the discipline in our context – no longer distanced and able to be bounded objects of study and analysis, our engagements have foregrounded decolonial praxis which have resisted mainstream approaches to teaching and learning and surfaced the assumptions located in the hidden curriculum, forcing all participants to confront the relations of power and privilege that exist within the discipline, the learning environment and academia in general (Styres 2018, 32-33).

EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY IN THE HISTORY OF ART CLASSROOM

Originally, we had envisioned the course as a way of contesting the multi-stranded sources of epistemic authority operating in the traditional History of Art classroom. Through the process of collaborative teaching we began working with the idea of "research-creation", the "complex intersection of art, theory, and research" identified by Springgay and Truman (2019, 152), in order to explore ways in which walking could assist in our understanding of individual aesthetics and as relational and socially engaged practices. As such we began to "walk-with" participants, landscapes (entrenched in settler colonial histories), contemporary arts-based practices, sensory enquiry and affect. As Springgay and Truman note:

> withness is not simply about group walking practices, but rather emphasises complicated relations and entanglements with humans, non-humans, Land, and an ethics of situatedness, solidarity and resistance. Walking-with is a deliberate strategy of unlearning, unsettling and queering how walking methods are framed and used in the social sciences and arts. (2019, 4)

The course experiments with the possibilities for walking pedagogies for this specific educational setting. At its core, it is a teaching and learning practice using a collaborative and participatory method that includes sensory inquiry. In order to shift our understanding of these ideas, the walking seminars took seriously the position that our location itself needed to be reorientated. Based on the concepts of *epistemic walks* (Augusto 2007), *walking as pedagogy* (Bates and Rhys-Taylor 2017) and *walking and landscapes* (Tilley 1994; Pearson and Shanks 2005) our engagement with both knowledge production and research methodologies all took place outside of the classroom whilst walking in different landscapes and environments. We were also interested in testing the limits and possibilities of incorporating the non-visual senses in a discipline that centers the principle of mastering and mastery through visuality.

COURSE DESIGN AND PEDAGOGIC PRINCIPLES (NOT) IN THE CLASSROOM

The postgraduate course on Postcolonial Art History was offered to Honours and Masters students within the department of History of Art at the University of the Witwatersrand for the first time in 2019. In 2020 and 2021 the course was profoundly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we tried to find alternative ways of offering the course under active pandemic and social distancing conditions, we felt that this compromised too many of the core principles of the collaborative, shared and reciprocal ways of "walking with" that underpinned the aims and

outcomes of the course. In 2022 we offered the course again. We have had modest numbers of students enrolled (eight in 2019 and seven in 2022) and we have explored different configurations of shared and solo walks, seminars, and self-study. However, both iterations of the course took the form of a seminar program that focused on the historical, sociological and post/decolonial approaches to reading, understanding and (de)constructing art histories today, especially as they are experienced within the landscapes of South Africa. No hiking experience was required to enroll for the course and all the hikes and walks were aimed at beginners. What also remained consistent was the course's block release format aimed at an immersive learning experience during a week-long excursion.

In 2019 the group traveled together to the Eastern Free State, an area outside of the small town of Clarens and close to the spectacular Golden Gate National Park. While we remained in South African territory, the paths that we walked lay right along the border with the mountainous sovereign state of Lesotho that lies inside and completely encapsulated by South Africa. During this week of walks (guided by a professional field guide) we encountered the border as a constant ephemeral companion, we often overlooked our neighboring state from the highground, hearing their radios and voices, catching sight and smell of their fires from the adjacent valley. In 2022, the group walked in the spring green grasslands of Mpumalanga on a farm near the towns of Carolina and Emanzana. Again lead by guides, our hikes re-traced the paths between the extensive Bokoni stonewalled settlements that have been the hub of a complex settled agricultural history and trade routes that stretched as far as Ponta Macaneta, on the northern edge of the Bay of Maputo (Delius, Maggs and Schoeman 2012).

We tried to interpolate the land as historical, physical, aesthetic, and sensory non-human companion in all our walks. Ranging from 3km-10km and urban to rural landscapes students and staff all gained a different sense physically of what the learning opportunities required. Over the course most students actively participated and there was a range of inputs (from taking point on hikes, meal preparation, leading the reading discussions) and supporting each other in the various circumstances we encountered. We were generally impressed by students' commitment to the experimental learning format and what they were communicating about their experience of the learning outcomes. In thinking about this relationship between different walking subjects (instructors, classmates, guests, other hikers, guides, animal companions) and the land we have frequently called on Tilley's layers of the landscape and the metaphor of "quilting" those layers through the embodied action by the individual walker.

We saw different "quilting points" selected, developed, discarded, revived and rejected. These included as diverse approaches as: encountering deep-time at a cosmological and geological scale; landscape's shaping through a history of extractive mining; landscape as source of indigenous medicine; a visualized rhythm analysis of the body's movement across terrain; how traversing physical landscapes can be mapped linguistically and semiotically; how obstacles in traversing physical landscapes are metaphoric for other kinds of crossings; how listening to music in the landscape can reshape how it is experienced. We observed how this list of quilting points students explore starts tentatively, multiplies, proliferates, and then ebbs towards final project submission week.

However, this kind of pedagogic encounter is not familiar to students. Likewise, in our roles as instructors and researchers we continue to grapple with the ambivalences of this mode of teaching and learning. This form of engagement as decolonial praxis is not always easy to do as we attempt to "unsettle and disrupt the status quo within educational contexts" (Styres 2018, 33). To this end we developed some strategies to anchor and shape the learning experience before we embarked on the major multi-day excursion. We scheduled a series of walks in and around the Johannesburg/Gauteng area. These were designed to give us all as course participants a chance to get to know each other and gauge our fitness levels and familiarity with hiking as an activity.

Each of the hikes was prefaced with a text or provocation to read or engage with beforehand. These provocations are related to the course reading materials. In 2019 these were relatively short, for example:

> *"Doing/thinking… How is decoloniality enacted? Bearing in mind Mignolo and Walsh's ideas of 'starting with the activity of thinking and theorizing from praxis',* (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p.9) *what observations can you offer about Tswaing through hiking the trail and encountering the traces evident in the landscape and the histories captured in existing narratives?"* (Prompt for day hike excursion to the Tswaing Meteorite Crater, North West Province, 2019)

However, students reported struggling to translate the prompt into a meaningful instruction that would lead to an end product that they felt comfortable with as legitimate and acceptable academic output. Responding to this feedback, in 2022 we provided more structure to these prompts, calling them "walking kits" and borrowing heavily from The Walking Lab's "Walking Propositions" (Truman and Springgay 2016) and the kinds of documenting practices of ethnographic fieldwork. Students were provided with an envelope printed with basic information to capture the date and site of the walk and instructions to record their observations about place, practice, and personal process framed by the prompts: "looking in", "looking about" and "thinking about." In addition, inside the envelopes were the instructions for a specific task for the day's walk and materials needed to record responses (for example; watercolor paper, note cards, maps, collection packets for samples, in one instance even a small plastic palette for mixing pigments).

AMBIVALENCES AND AMBIGUITIES: REVIEWING THE EXPERIENCE OF A WALKING PEDAGOGY

In practice, participants (students and instructors) found unanticipated sites of resistance, productive disruptions, and electrifying new directions. These included grappling with the manifold, unthought-of, entanglements of pedagogic actors (human and otherwise) that arise when the landscape is not a bounded object of analysis but expands to include: unlooked for experiences of aesthetic and affect; the pleasures of meal preparation and the pain of long days of walking; the role of instructor as a mobile yoke that was slipped on and off, passed on, shared, refused, endured, and embraced in different measure by participants in different moments.

This approach inverted something about the expectations around classroom performance: Those students who could talk confidently about the landscape and read the traditional academic literature responded and engaged differently to those who felt confident walking or hiking in the landscape. We witnessed completely different senses of confidence, familiarity and abilities to contribute in those two different spaces. This became part of our attempt to respond to the decolonial and yielded more than talking about themes, theory, or content, it became rather an active attempt to shift whose capital counted where and when.

As such we were led to reconsider whose, and what, forms of knowledge were privileged over others in this newly configured learning space. We wanted to go beyond the traditional forms of book and image learning as the basis for the traditional art historical classroom where we teach students how to analyze the concept of "landscape" and which privileges certain ways of knowing, forms of cultural capital, and kinds of knowers. We were pleased with how the course succeeded in offering students different entry points that would not be available in the traditional classroom. At the same time, we recognized the ambiguity in the destabilization of previously achieved forms of "mastery." To varying degrees students were successful in reestablishing a new sort of equilibrium. In this we were reminded again of Styres, who points out the difficulty of engaging with decolonial praxis for students, noting that "there is a general unwillingness to engage with the

uncomfortable process of decolonization because decolonizing is an unsettling process of shifting and unravelling the tangled colonial relations of power and privilege" (2018, 30).

We also found it difficult to navigate some of the persistent ideas of walking and learning. A successful walking pedagogy requires a willingness for unlearning. Postgraduate students, and especially postgraduate students with a love for and interest in Art History, have had years of schooling and tertiary education that have calcified the idea of the walking tour or the educational walk as a pedagogical genre that is quite different from a walking pedagogy. A key difference is that while the walking tour is a bounded, discreet learning moment, a walk premised on a walking pedagogy is a cumulative, process-based open-ended learning opportunity. We found students looked for and actively desired the former's clearly laid out route to content mastery and the more didactic role of the instructor as one who transmits knowledge. The more we resisted being enrolled into the subject position of teachers or instructors and repositories of content knowledge and the more we prioritized experiential learning, the more we sensed students' frustration at what they seemed to perceive as the "withholding" of expertise. For students the walking pedagogies required a greater set of risks than they may have expected from a course. The difficulty of decolonial praxis and our use of walking pedagogies resisted the assumptions around what "travel" may come to mean for the participants and the associated rewards. Within traditional academic programs the risks and rewards are clearly defined and there remains an assumption that the reward largely outweighs the nominal risks for students who stick to the "itinerary" (reproduce knowledge, master disciplines, reinforce hierarchical power structures). Their structure is echoed across other educational contexts where privileged positions of knowledge production and power remain intact. What our course design required was greater risk-taking and challenge; not only of the power relations and ideas of who was the final repository of knowledge and experience, but also, as Styres reminds us, "of students' own prior knowledge, positionalities and the resulting implications of what they have learned from course material" (Styres 2018, 34). Students' hesitancy in this regard continues to be something for us to take seriously and opens the possibility to consider alternative strategies for this part of the decolonial praxis in future iterations of the course.

Another aspect that we continue to grapple with is our assumption that anyone could do the course – or at least could manage the walks without being a hiker. Part of the engagement was about the body learning what it feels like to be immersed in the environment, to pay attention to things like food and water, distance and your feet, physicality and fatigue: in other words, the explicit anchoring into the landscape which we wanted students to experience. That being said, the method is not one that is all about accessibility and there were a number of aspects that despite our intentions re-encoded and reinscribed certain kinds of relations. For example, the gendered ways that we allocated accommodations and indeed the ways that the students wanted to arrange accommodation options. These gendered roles further played out along the lines of labor that were observed, adhered to, and happily subverted. Critically, the course and its use of the walking pedagogy has yet to be tested in terms of physical accessibility as we have not had a diverse range of physical and other abilities represented in our student cohort.

CONCLUSION

The undoing impulse of the decolonial asks us to arrest our assumptions about the totality of the visual as a way of knowing. This, we argue, is a departure for a course in art history. We note the ambiguity of what students gleaned about traditional aspects of postcolonial art history. We were careful not to reinscribe colonial relations of power and privilege through the imposition of the canon and so, while materials remained available throughout the program for students to return to and engage with, staff did not focus on summarizing content and debates as may be expected from traditional seminar formats. This is potentially an inescapable ambivalence in institutional curricula and a walking pedagogy that, in this context at least, is experimental and deployed in the service of decolonial praxis. The paradox of university course requirements and these ways of

knowing remain. We continue to grapple with the ways in which curriculum and its design and implementation are required to be "disciplined" into a recognizable format, and the urgency of decolonized praxis. We note that this produces tensions for students who, occupying multiple positions, are required to engage with experimental, "undisciplined" epistemology and simultaneously required to produce traditional academic outputs. Furthermore, students have largely come to university at great personal cost to acquire precisely the kinds of capital that were being challenged by the course and we realize how profoundly destabilizing this could be.

In closing we return to the shared ideas at the start of the course and why a walking methodology provided an appropriate route to fulfil our aims. Firstly, it provided a means to experiential learning that took us outside of the classroom. It facilitated a focus on the collaborative pedagogic approach rather than a particular visual methodology. It allowed us to surface the hidden curriculum, those unwritten values and unspoken rules of legitimacy and expectations that abide in institutional ideas of competence and mastery. We believe this is where the course has been most successful, where this pedagogical approach allowed us all to engage explicitly as equally vulnerable participants with frailties and feelings about the walks and all of the associated experiences became very apparent and present in discussions. There is no doubt that this course revealed all our investments in ways that would not have been apparent through the discursive or visual modes familiar to the classroom.

As lecturers, our commitment to disrupting ideas of mastery, of epistemic distance and objectivity as response to decolonial praxis found traction in this method and likewise the goal of disrupting ideas of land and landscape and its role in colonial history. Rather than reproducing and reinscribing those histories we consider this a necessary intervention. In so doing we are not laying claim to the full spectrum of the potentials for walking pedagogy as liberatory, as ours was a more modest aim, but it was fundamental in shifting our teaching practice away from content.

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BIOGRAPHIES

Nicola Cloete is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Curatorial, Public and Visual Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand. Born in South Africa, she completed an undergraduate degree in Dramatic Art at Wits University, a Master's degree in Gender Culture and Politics at Birkbeck College, London, and worked in academia and television as a researcher before returning to Wits to take up a position in the Wits School of Arts and completing her PhD in Political Studies. Her research and teaching focus on an interdisciplinary approach to visual and cultural studies with a specific emphasis on memory studies, slavery in South Africa, and gender and race theories as they pertain to the politics of representation. Her recent research examines the memory politics in representations of slavery in post-Apartheid South Africa. She is currently writing a book, supported by the Advancing Humanities Grant, called *Holding Memory: Slavery and Post-Apartheid Cultural Production*. She has recently been awarded the Zumkher Prize for Scholarship in Public Memory (2022), and held the Harvard South Africa Fellowship (2011-2012), and she serves on the editorial board of the academic journals *African Studies* and *De Arte*. She has also served on the boards of the Market Theatre Foundation (2008-2011) and the advisory panel for Music and Theatre of the National Arts Council.

Catherine Duncan is a lecturer in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Culture Studies Department in the School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her teaching practice is grounded in curiosity, reflexivity, and the belief that learning is a relational, situated practice. She prioritizes creating conditions for discovery and conversation, fostering inclusivity, and embracing collaboration with colleagues and students as co-learners. Being located in a School of Arts, much of her teaching practice and research into the scholarship of teaching and learning focuses on creative research and participation. As a Film and Media Studies scholar, her teaching and research are oriented towards popular texts and the audiences who enjoy them, especially South African and transnational fan networks, translocal audiences, and participatory media cultures. She is particularly interested in the informal circuits of the creative industries within these fan networks.

Anton Coetzee is a PhD student in History of Art at the University of the Witwatersrand. The centerpiece of his research is the creation of three-dimensional digital copies of archaeological and heritage objects and sites, with a theoretical focus on their ontological multivalence, and how they may be reconstructed as epistemic objects without reinscribing colonial practices of collection and cataloguing. Extending these ideas to the understanding of landscapes as colonially created epistemic objects – created using technologies of surveillance and cartography – offers us new lenses through which to consider their decolonization.

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"Postcolonial" Travel: Of Empires and the Empirical

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ABSTRACT
Drawing on walking tours experienced on two Academic Travels in the discipline of Postcolonial Studies, I seek to explore where Academic Travel's desire for authenticity goes head to head with the institutionalization, commodification and consumption of postcolonialism as travel experience. Moving through a consideration of the ambiguities of Postcolonial Studies in the academy, the tensions Graham Huggan has identified between postcolonialism (as resistance practice to Western systems and structures – also of thought) and postcoloniality (the commodification of difference), my contribution aims to uncover the ways in which these ambiguous dynamics are replicated in "postcolonial" travel, suspended between highlighting the continuing power of the colonial system in action in tourism practice and the marketing of historical and contemporary spaces in a commercialization of postcolonial cultural production and the fetishization of difference. Answering calls to take the postcolonial "outside" and critically engage with and theorize pedagogy on the ground, I describe how our move into the empirical, in Berlin's "Afrikanisches Viertel" (African Quarter) and in the Parisian district of La Goutte d'Or, brought an empir(e)ical experience, a chronotopal thickening, a dialog between time, space, history, all of the various actors involved and the narratives and representations brought to the space, producing site-and-time-specific ways of telling that thereby enmeshed us in our own practice and confronted us not only with the significance of the socio-political moment, but also, in a productive discomfort, with ourselves.

KEY WORDS
Postcolonial Studies, Postcolonial Travel, Frontstage/Backstage, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Memory, Chronotope

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> *"[T]he very idea of postcolonial spaces is layered with, and evocative of, empires past, present and future, complicated stories and identities, intimate and alienated relationships, shifting borders and contested terrains, ambivalent, partial and contradictory meanings. Within these spaces people live and make sense of their lives. Here is the riddle; they occupy shifting spaces, they shift the spaces they occupy and yet the spaces are the same spaces that existed before." (Tuhiwai Smith 2006, 549)*

> *"[T]here is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality." (Said 1989, 211)*

INTRODUCTION: POSTCOLONIAL SPACES AND "CONTESTED TERRAIN"

In the following reflection, I would like to unpick what happens when you take courses in the discipline of Postcolonial Studies on the road.[1] But what does the idea of "postcolonial" travel even denote, what should it denote? While our Academic Travels, and educational travel programs in general, are not tourism as such, they do still arguably fall under John Urry's category of "organised travel", which also encompasses the Grand Tour, and they are thereby tied up in notions of "touring as an opportunity for discourse" and of "cognitive and perceptual education", but also, and equally, in the notion of the "visualisation of the travel experience", in other words the development of the always-already power implicated "tourist gaze", as well as in that of "class restriction" and privilege (Urry 2002, 4).[2] In the present reflection, I move towards an articulation of the ethical challenges and lessons of "postcolonial" travel through the examples of two Academic Travels I lead to the European metropoles Berlin and Paris, examining in particular where ideas about "postcolonial" travel "grate and bleed" in incursions into "backstage spaces", spaces not designed as primary tourist destinations, spaces where "people live and make sense of their lives" (Anzaldúa 1987; Tuhiwai Smith 2006, 549). I attempt to also outline the tensions between the critically resistance-oriented postcolonialism, that seeks to disestablish imperial modes and institutionalized structures of knowing, and the commodification-oriented postcoloniality, that markets itself on precisely these "ideas about cultural otherness" and resistance and makes products out of them (Huggan 2001, 28). In so doing, I aim to tease out, through the examples of walking tours in the Berlin district of Wedding and the Parisian district of La Goutte d'Or, what happens when academic ideas synergize or clash with the experiential, when explorations of the systems of Empire become empirical.

A.-M. Nogués-Pedregal (2012a, xiv) writes that "no social process exists independently of its practicing", and, for better or for worse, engaging with Postcolonial Studies on the ground always already means entering into it. This goes back to Edward W. Said's words in my epigraph, for just as no discipline can separate itself out from "sociocultural, historical, and political formations" and every study is implicated in itself, this holds (and should hold) even more true for empirical explorations (1989, 211). Yet, precisely here we are simultaneously offered a productive, if ambivalently charged, opportunity to make these formations visible and to subject them to an experientially-based critique.[3]

My reflections here are sparked by student reactions to a walking tour on the most recent iteration of my Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies CLCS 247T French Cultural Institutions: Power and Representation travel. In selecting the walking tour as part of our travel

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[1] I am grateful to the research assistants who have supported me over the course of this project, Destiny Brown and Daniela Perezchica-Trancoso, funded by Franklin University Switzerland's LLLS program, and especially for the important resources they both brought to light on "postcolonial" travel.

[2] My colleague Poulomi Dasgupta also acknowledges this aspect of privilege in her work on her Academic Travel in Sustainable Development (2021, 140).

[3] See also Bahri (1997) – I am indebted to Bahri's ideas about taking Postcolonial Studies beyond the classroom, and I return to these in my conclusion.

program, I initially believed I had thought carefully both about the institution I was booking it from (the ICI, L'Institut des Cultures d'Islam/the Institute of Islamic Cultures), and about walking tours I had done with students both on the earlier version of this travel and on my CLCS 238T Reading the Postcolonial City: Berlin and Hamburg travel. Yet, as Cloete, Duncan and Coetzee discuss in this volume, when is walking ever just walking? This walking tour played into the themes of my course in ways I had not anticipated. In both informal conversations and in the course evaluation, students constructively expressed their discomfort with the ways in which we were making incursions into lived spaces. It was precisely their discomfort that caused me to stop and look more closely and comparatively at two activities, namely neighborhood walking tours with associated site visits, that I thought I was doing in the same way across two different travels, that had the same "description", and much of the same preparatory reading, but that actually played out very differently on the ground, in a time-space web and when plugged into by students. The following is a reflection on what I learned, along with and thanks to the students of that CLCS 247T class: about the importance of how experiences are conducted, about what is explored, about who the guide is and about the significance of whether the tour is institutionalized or not, and in what ways it is institutionalized and arguably thereby "commodified" (in Huggan's sense of postcoloniality; 2001, 28). Similarly, the contrasting experiences of these two walking tours suggest that there is a great difference between exploring or "traveling into" cultural *space*, or doing "cultural tourism" (Urry 2002), and exploring or "traveling into" cultural *memory* (Assmann 1995).

Following John Urry, Jennifer Craik defines cultural tourism as "where cultural sites, events, attractions, and/or experiences are marketed as primary tourist experiences": two of the more impactful in this context are "the commercialisation of culture and cultural products" and "the restructuring of cultural production into the cultural industries" (1997, 113). The fact that the Paris neighborhood walking tour emanated from the "cultural industry" of the ICI, and was thus implicitly commercialized, or, after Graham Huggan (2001, 28), commodified, as a selectable, bookable offering on its website, visibly and "economically" tied to it, seems to invite an exploration of the ideas of ethnocommodity, defined by Meiu et al. (2020, 17) as the merchandizing of the desirability of difference (from a white "center"), and of the postcolonial exotic (the consumption and becoming-product of postcolonialism, or "the booming 'alterity industry'"; Huggan, 2001, vii-viii). Similarly, the marketing of the tour in question plays into observations about the becoming-bourgeois and strategized "mixing" of the area masking social inequalities and power imbalances (Albert-Blanco 2022).

In Berlin on the other hand, the neighborhood walking tour, via its literal and narrative exploration of street names and naming, was primarily a journey into cultural memory, "that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image", where the "face" of the neighborhood demonstrates how Berlin (and German) society is "aware" of itself as a group and (chooses to) "[become] visible to itself and to others" (Assmann 1995, 132-33). As Assmann argues in this context, "[w]hich past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and tendencies of a society" (1995, 132-33), and this was both our travel's exploratory conceptual focus and what we experienced and saw on the ground.

In order to journey through the ideas related to this reflection on the "curation" of "postcolonial" travel, I first give a brief overview of the specificities of the two travels themselves and the two districts in question, as a preface to exploring notions of postcolonialism and institutionalization more broadly. My subsequent foci will be "postcolonial" travel and backstage spaces, and I will conclude by investigating how these collected theoretical ideas, metonyms of the academy, "grate and bleed" on the ground, at the interstices of postcolonialism and postcoloniality.

AT THE CORE: TWO TRAVELS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

To underline the core ideas of the two travels as *academic* explorations before looking at how these ideas feed into the walking tour examples, it is necessary to first give a brief overview from their course outlines, as well as some general context about the areas in which these ideas ultimately play(ed) out in the iterations of the travels I discuss here.

My German travel in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, CLCS 238T Reading the Postcolonial City: Berlin & Hamburg, the first object of this analysis, took place in the Fall semester 2018. It had first run in Fall 2015, with a very similar schedule and experiences, and both iterations focused on close ties with postcolonial and anti-racist organizations in both cities, primarily Berlin Postkolonial (now part of Dekoloniale)[4] and Arbeitskreis (working group) HAMBURG POSTKOLONIAL. The course's main learning goals are to move towards an understanding of how to "read" traces of the past from the face of the city and to explore how these major German cities are engaging with these traces and remembering these pasts, or "dark heritages", in their present (Förster et al. 2016). Excerpts from the course description put forward that:

> Colonialism has left its traces not only very obviously on the former colonies themselves but also on the face of the cities of the colonizers. […] Seeking to explore colonial echoes in less obvious places, namely in contemporary Berlin and Hamburg, the course asks how we can remember colonialism in the modern world, become conscious of its traces, and encourage critical thinking about the connections between colonialism, migration and globalization. […] Where can we see [colonialism's] traces in the modern city? How could or should we remember it and how can we actively employ its vestiges to engage critically with the past and to renegotiate it?

My French travel, also in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, CLCS 247T, has been through two titles. Beginning as "French Orientalisms Renegotiated" in Spring 2016, the Registrar's concern that the theoretically-weighted title would dissuade students from enrolling was addressed by a shifted emphasis to on-the-ground activities and to spelling out the dynamics it explores. It became "French Cultural Institutions: Power and Representation", a title that has turned out to be very apt in the context of the present discussion. The course ran once in France and once on campus in the COVID-hit Spring 2020 before its most recent iteration, and it seeks to explore the interplay between representation and institutions, investigating how societies represent themselves through the shaping and recognition of Muslim Maghrebi French "presence":

> Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century French authors and artists were instrumental in shaping the imaginary of the "Orient", with a myriad of paintings and texts housed for public consumption in national cultural institutions. Students will use the French case to explore the politics of representation: the creation and objectification of an Oriental "Other." On-the-ground field study in museums, archives and galleries of Paris (the former colonial capital) and Marseille (the "Gateway to North Africa") will help students to investigate the ties that bind the visual arts and literature with the exercising of knowledge and power, and to read literary and artistic works as shaped by their cultural and historical circumstances. […W]hat broader significance […] might [this] have for questions of representation and identity, Self and Other, in the (not only French) present[?… Gallery "encounters" will] consider the significance of reappropriating the gaze and of the relationship between visual pleasure and politics, while questioning who art is "for" and where the "representation business" takes us.

In a sense, the comparative match-up of the two course descriptions already demonstrates where I had erred when I tried to introduce an institutionalized walking tour into my French travel.

[4] See https://dekoloniale.de/de

Institutionalization and representation are what we set out to critique on this travel, and yet I proceeded as if the walking tour would automatically renegotiate traces on the face of the neighborhood in which we were walking. However, just because the institution (the ICI) is a modern one, and experienced controversial beginnings in its attempt to combine the cultural and the "cultual" in laic France (see, for example, Albert-Blanco 2022), does not mean that its role as purveyor of the tour does not shape that tour in complex – and equally institutionalized – ways.

In its first iteration in 2016, our CLCS 247T walking tour had been conducted in quite a different context by Nabila Mokrani, a freelancing curator associated with artists on our syllabus who seek to renegotiate representation (and herself a "subject" of the art of Houria Niati).[5] Mokrani had both taken us on a brief walk-through of La Goutte d'Or and Montmartre and given us a talk in a local brasserie about contemporary (French-)Maghrebi women artists, subsequently being interviewed by a group of students about her experiences as curator and subject of this contemporary art.

It is the approach to this district itself that historically shapes the interactions with it. Indeed, the area being walked around, La Goutte d'Or, is always already marked by the way it has been included in the French cultural imagination, as Kaplan and Recoquillon write: "As North African immigrants poured into this district during the 1960s, it is likely that an image of the Goutte d'Or as an exotic locale was fixed in the French imagination and added to its reputation" (2014, 40). The informality of Mokrani's tour, its affiliation with her own expressed identities, and its siting within her contribution to group discussion and her role as interview subject produced a very different engagement with representation to that of the later ICI experience. With Mokrani, we were not seeking to "define" a place or space, we were walking through it with little dialogue, experiencing it, and also experiencing it in conjunction with its siting in the city of Paris, and not as a closed-off space. Kaplan and Recoquillon write that "[j]ust as a group is defined partly by its external boundaries, the perceptions of outsiders have a large role in defining this place" (2014, 48). With Mokrani, we literally crossed these "external" boundaries and walked it into frontstage Paris, the famous district of Montmartre.

Marie-Hélène Bacqué and Yankel Fijalkow (2006, 73) write about perceptions of the social and historical development of La Goutte d'Or as a district that welcomed Algerians and Algerian independence organizations during the Algerian War of Independence, and then made way for left-wing organizations defending immigrant causes in the 1970s, who called on such public figures as Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault for support. The substantial amount of research done on the area focuses on its concentration of non-French-born immigrants and its "identity" as providing products and services from North and Sub-Saharan African countries, and on gentrification and the movement of Bohemian bourgeois and champagne socialists into the area, as well as on (subsequent) social representation and "social mixing" and area redevelopment to "balance populations" (Kaplan and Recoquillon 2014; Pattaroni, Kaufmann and Thomas 2012; Bacqué et al. 2011).

Hancock and Albert-Blanco have compellingly demonstrated how the institution in which the second iteration of our walking tour was sited, the ICI (L'Institut des Cultures d'Islam/the Institute of Islamic Cultures) is wrapped up in the politics of "civilizing" and "controlling" Islamic expression in La Goutte d'Or, while Albert-Blanco has gone on to track the enmeshment of the ICI project with gentrification, and with the positive "coding" of the area within the context of a broader range of "politics of attractiveness, of 'social mixing' […and of] 'sociological diversity'"[6] for a space that "remains today one of the sectors of Paris with the highest percentage of foreigners and working class"[7] (Hancock 2019; Albert-Blanco 2022). This

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[5] See http://hourianiati.com/gallery.php?c=films "Emigrée et Demi… Un Portrait de Nabila" ("Emigrée and a Half… A Portrait of Nabila") and http://hourianiati.com/gallery.php?c=11 "What If?"

[6] "politiques d'attractivité […,] de 'mixité sociale' […et de] 'diversité sociologique.'"

[7] "demeure aujourd'hui l'un des secteurs de Paris dans lequel la part d'étrangers et de classes populaires est la plus élevée."

notion of “social mixing”, as we have seen above, is in fact one of the primary modes under which the area is studied.

Originally conceived of in 2001 under mayor Bertrand Delanoë as part of a “solution” to address praying in the road caused by the overspill of worshippers because of the size of the mosques (Albert-Blanco 2022), the conception of the ICI had the effect of replacing this “by an expression conforming more closely to dominant conceptions of urban space”,[8] and commentators have noted the “contradictory impulses” of freedom of religious expression, but also control of it (Albert-Blanco 2022; Hancock 2019; Milne 2018). Famous for its hiccups in terms of getting spaces, and in terms of the vacillation of Anne Hidalgo and the Paris mayoralty on the issue despite the proposed private funding of the Institute’s prayer room, the lack of public support precipitated the resignation of the then president of the ICI in 2016 (Hancock 2019, 9, 14). However, perceived pushback against Paris leadership is tempered by the notion that the institution, precisely as a public institution, pushes “a certain idea of diversity”[9] (Albert-Blanco 2019, 32). Bacqué and Fijalkow go further to suggest that the gentrification projects in La Goutte d’Or, which include the ICI, are like a new form of colonizing of an area viewed in the early 1980s as having a “concentration” of poor immigrants (2006, 63, 70).

The traces of the Berlin walking tour site are very different, with a shift from the representation of lived spaces to an exploration of memorializing functions on the face of the city. Also a neighborhood space, the “Afrikanisches Viertel” (African Quarter) of the district of Wedding in Berlin, where we conducted the “Postcolonial City” travel, as Nabizadeh and Förster et al. concur, is an unremarkable space in the social landscape of Berlin, quiet and “residential”, with modest grey and brown apartment buildings, a small shopping area and a few cafés (Nabizadeh 2012, 41; Förster et al 2016, 3). Rather, with a focus primarily on the street naming that gives the area its own epithet, and the history behind these names, it is a site that promotes discussion and reflection on the echoing of the German colonial past in the contemporary landscape, on the “material and semantic marks of this past present in the public space”, and on its “contestation” (Engler 2013, 41; Förster et al. 2016, 1). In this vein, it becomes a space characterized by Förster et al. as “a public arena” that is the site of struggles between “different social groups” and their readings and understandings of the past, because of the street naming that effectuates an inscription of the “colonial expansion of the German Empire in the public space and thus also in the collective memory landscape of Berlin” (Förster et al. 2016, 2-3; Kopp and Krohn 2013, 223). This becoming-public of the area’s memory via the “communicative function” of street signs, particularly in a situation where only twenty percent of street signs in Germany are named after people (Ehrhardt 2022, 305, 315), reminds of Stuart Hall’s discourse on how heritage “becomes the material embodiment of the spirit of the nation, a collective representation” (Hall 1999, 14). Street naming laws in the German context are currently challenging because they do not allow for the colonial past, rather only for the National Socialist past and communism (Förster et al. 2016, 4-5).

In 2004, public information boards were set up in the district contextualizing the Afrikanisches Viertel and its street names, and coming out of the discussion surrounding this initiative (and the refusal to actually rename the streets).[10] This in turn led to the development of the walking tours, as well as exhibitions, with the aim of fostering public consciousness for the situation (Engler 2013, 41). Similarly, in 2008 Berlin Postkolonial put out a dossier on the colonial street names in the city of Berlin “stressing the symbolic power of street names to provide orientation not only in urban space but also in history” and began putting together postcolonial maps of the city and pushing for the renaming of streets (Förster et al. 2016, 6; Engler 2013, 46).

Research focusing on the Afrikanisches Viertel predominantly centers on ideas that

[8] “par une expression plus conforme aux conceptions dominantes de l’espace urbain.”

[9] “une certaine idée de la diversité.”

[10] There were two versions of the information on the boards, one from the Berlin BVV and one from Berlin Postkolonial (Engler 2013, 41).

representation in the public space, as aligned with notions of cultural memory and entering into cultural memory, can engage with and comment on ideas of who belongs to the city and who gets to be a citizen, and can make clear links between the cultural memory tussles surrounding street signs and racism in the present (see for example Engler 2013, 42; Bönkost 2017). Thus, the Afrikanisches Viertel is predominantly studied as "a place of learning and remembrance" that serves as a point of negotiation of "memory politics, identity politics and spatial politics" (Engler 2013, 50, 52). Needless to say, the Quarter is also a space where people live who might not want to learn and remember: a student article relates the throwing of a raw egg at a similar educational tour to ours (Jacobs and Sprute 2019, 115). These actors, argue Förster et al. "interpret space as a bounded territory over which only those who physically and emotionally 'belong' to this space have the power of decision" – for this reason, Berlin Postkolonial moved their offices to Wedding to be physically present at the site (Förster et al. 2016, 10).

While the foundation of Berlin Postkolonial in 2007, as Förster et al. explain, united "anticolonial activists from both Germany and former African colonies", opposed to Berlin Postkolonial in the area is a group of residents, Initiative Pro Afrikanisches Viertel, protesting the idea of street renaming, and actively courting support in its prevention, particularly in the cases of Nachtigalplatz, Petersallee and Lüderitzstrasse, which were "officially recommended" for renaming in 2018 by the leadership of the overarching district of Berlin Mitte (Förster et al. 2016, 6-7; Steckenbiller 2019, 109). Significantly for our purposes, the postcolonial and anti-racist organizations in question, as NGOs, "are placed outside the state's representational system and must therefore strive to influence the political discourse in an agitational way" (Förster et al. 2016, 8). This *non*-institutionalization is significant, both for its possibilities of genuine resistance and for the outsider status that it holds that restricts its impact, and I will return to it in the context of our own Academic Travel walking tour experience below.

As we can see from the area descriptions and the work that scholars have done to tease out their dynamics, both areas can be characterized as study sites in different ways – La Goutte d'Or is predominantly of interest for researchers in terms of its demographics, or indeed as something of a congratulatory study on multicultural Paris, while the Afrikanisches Viertel is a site of memory. Precisely as "study sites" both are backstage but also in the public arena, and La Goutte d'Or is made further frontstage by its building projects that draw in visitors, both local and international. Tensions between the way the areas are lived and the way the areas are studied characterize both sites, as do notions of power and planning: Brian Ladd argues in the case of Berlin that "[a]ll urban planning contains an authoritarian element [and] planning and architecture are always linked closely to power" (1997, 139). Christiane Steckenbiller (2019, 108) further draws on Ladd to posit that planning "naturalizes" signs and markers of hegemonic power structures, and this leads into important considerations for an engagement with both areas, both in terms of the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the ICI in La Goutte d'Or and the debates surrounding the changing or preservation of street signs in the Afrikanisches Viertel – and for how these circumstances impacted our own empirical engagement with the two areas.

THE AMBIVALENCES OF THE POSTCOLONIAL AND THE UNIVERSITY

Both of the Academic Travels in question are sited not only within Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, which, as per Franklin's Academic Catalog, "invites students to think about the nature, function and impact of storytelling in a globalized world", but also, specifically, within Franklin's Postcolonial Studies Minor, developed by Alexandra Peat and Fintan Hoey:

> The minor in Postcolonial Studies builds upon Franklin's culture of travel and global citizenship by asking students to think critically about what it means to travel and live in an increasingly interconnected, yet persistently unequal world. Postcolonial Studies examines the effects of colonial encounters and structures

> from a transdisciplinary perspective. The courses in this minor explore global power structures and the ways in which literatures and other media are produced, disseminated, and consumed in a postcolonial world. (FUS Academic Catalog 2023)

The minor is explicitly enmeshed with our Academic Travel Program in this description, and its transdisciplinary impetus encourages us to take these ideas further and critically explore them both inside and outside of the classroom, alongside its specific set of learning outcomes, which put forward that once they have completed the minor, students should have:

> 1. Acquired a sound understanding of a broad range of *postcolonial texts and theories*;
> 2. Learned how to apply *postcolonial terms and concepts* in their own work;
> 3. Gained an awareness of the *enduring legacy of colonialism* in shaping both global systems and individual ways of thinking, seeing, and understanding;
> 4. Developed *research strategies in postcolonial studies* that reflect the disciplines represented;
> 5. Become familiar with *the role of class, gender, location, nationality, race, and ethnicity in a postcolonial context*;
> 6. Gained an awareness of *the interdisciplinary links among postcolonial literatures, theories*, and historical/economic/cultural/social/political change;
> 7. Acquired *an understanding of postcolonial studies* as an academic discipline that, in the words of Graham Huggan, expresses a *"commitment to an ethical academic citizenship" and hopes for "real and equitable social change."* (Peat and Hoey 2017)

In particular, the call to "*ethical academic citizenship*" that forms the last, overarching outcome and concern of the minor, reminds us both of the responsibilities of Postcolonial Studies as a subject area within the university and of the possibilities of the travel match up.

Indeed, Postcolonial Studies does not always sit easily within the academy. Commentators have written on the tensions, contradictions and ambivalences of this siting within academia as an institution,[11] a space we (should) acknowledge urgently needs to be decolonized, based as it is on *un*acknowledged systemic "shaping of social relations by offering images and narratives about who (we think) we are and how we understand ourselves to be" (Douglas 2022, 254). Anne-Marie d'Hauteserre summarizes the crux of this problem in terms of systems of thought: "postcolonialism offers a critique of Western structures of knowledge and power. It is defined as reflexive Western thought, interrogating and rethinking the very terms by which it has constructed knowledge through the duality of colonizer and colonized" (2004, 235). And yet, "a critique of Western structures of knowledge" and "reflexive Western thought" are not really the same thing, for the second implies that one is still using these structures to critique themselves – as Linda Tuhiwai Smith cautions: "The master's tools of colonization will not work to decolonize what the master built" (2021, 22).

Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia highlight the ambivalence of challenges and possibilities for the field within the academic system:

> both as an institution where people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and as a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. […] On the one hand, [education] is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education [a site where legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of globalization intersect] that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism's continuing hold on our imagination. (2006, 257)

[11] See, for example Bahri (1997), Loomba et al. (2005) and Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006).

As is clear from the above, even, and perhaps especially, in thought, the postcolonial, precisely as a "disciplinary practice" is always already implicated within "educational institutional structures" at one and the same time as it is, as Diana Brydon identifies, haunted by "difficult forms of knowing" (2013, 3-4). Deepika Bahri frames the situation thus: "When marginality is sanctioned by institutional decree, it is apt to be defused", and she goes on to demonstrate that postcolonial studies is not just constrained by the academy but also by the wider world "the material conditions of […] the outside having defined the inside, so to speak" (1997, 281, 283). Bahri acknowledges thereby the ambivalent situation of postcolonial teaching and learning in the academy "within the context circuits of production and consumption", the framework of which enables the development of "a manageable, systematized, and consumable discourse of difference" that by its very nature, in this context, has turned marginality into "a valuable intellectual commodity" through "academic fetishisation" (Bahri 1997, 280; Huggan 2001, viii; Suleri in Huggan 2001, 17). This "managed" engagement with otherness, Bahri continues, both "'contains' the possibilities of resistance" and "leaves the normative intact", ending, as we can see above in the example of circular thought processes, by duplicating the system whose power injustices and inequalities it should by rights be bringing to light (Bahri 1997, 278-79). I argue that it is precisely this idea of the management and construction of a course, alongside ideas about "trends" in creating and consuming postcolonial texts, that is thought-provoking and potentially problematic on the ground, replicating as it does both the construction of our Academic Travel programs and the construction of the tours themselves, where we risk siting the student as "consumer" and ourselves as "purveyor[s], facilitator[s], and […] tour guide[s]" (Bahri 1997, 284) within the system and thought processes described above – if these are not both carefully critiqued in advance and empirically highlighted in the moment.

The fine line the postcolonial walks in academia (its face value versus its actuality on the ground) is embodied by its siting in the university, it is already a contested and ambivalent discipline by being a discipline in the first place. Not surprisingly, similar tensions and ambivalences, also circling around notions of power, representation, Othering and commodification, are inherent in the idea of "postcolonial" *travel* – so what potential does the combination of the two hold? Can it point beyond obvious ambivalences to offer further possibilities for a "real" understanding within spaces? Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia and Bahri call for Postcolonial Studies to be taken "outside", in Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia's case to be able to understand, in the "vernacular", as they put it, "outside political forces" as tied up in localities in modes "that are specific to [those] particular localities" with the aim of "elaborat[ing] new modes of imperial power and […] devis[ing] ways of resisting them in and through education" (2006, 257). Bahri also sees these possibilities inherent "beyond the brick and mortar classroom" in "a projection of symbolic educational issues into a larger frame of reference" (1997, 294). In writing about our travel experiences it is my hope that I am answering Bahri's and Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia's calls to critically theorize our pedagogy in engaging with it through the specificities of "vernacular" localities, on the ground.

(HOW) IS "POSTCOLONIAL" TRAVEL POSSIBLE?

Much like the ambivalent situation of Postcolonial Studies within the academy, unpicking the problematics of what could constitute issues and opportunities for "postcolonial" travel on the ground involves an exploration of subject positioning in space and the (resultant) gaze, also on the self, tied up as it is with tourism consumption, the dynamics of Othering and the construction of the "exotic." Moving through ideas about "difference projection" (Hollinshead in Amoamo 2009, 14), categorizing, and the gaze, I seek here first to outline the colonial continuities of the tourism system, before touching on the practices of the postcolonial-tourist-wannabe (authenticity and backstage tourism), finally addressing ethical modes and situated approaches for tackling the tourism system from within. To me, "postcolonial" tourism seems to be made up of two constituent and complimentary parts, the first, understanding the functioning of tourism as a

continuing colonial system, and the second, the attempt to do tourism and travel differently, "postcolonially" (in the sense of the resistance to this system; Huggan 2001), a worthy ambition that does not always work in practice because of the commodified nature of the space these attempts play out in (its "postcoloniality"; Huggan 2001) and the ethical questions surrounding incursions into lived spaces per se.

In his comparison of the dynamics of "institutionalisation [in] Western commercial and educational systems", Graham Huggan sets us up for crossover in the ambiguities inherent in Postcolonial Studies and those of the idea of "postcolonial" tourism, both relying, as they do, on "postcolonial cultural production" which is "profoundly affected, but not totally governed, by commodification […and…] frequently, but not invariably, subject to the fetishisation of cultural difference" (Huggan 2001, 27). Indeed, Hall and Tucker introduce their volume *Tourism and Postcolonialism* with the reflection that "[f]or the vast majority of people, otherness is what makes a destination worthy of consumption" (2004, 8). Nogués-Pedregal, in turn, concludes that this "attraction for variance", spatial or expressive, does not have to be experienced in traveling outside the nation, it can also simply be a(nother) neighborhood where it is possible to experience "other modes of life" (which, for Nogués-Pedregal, includes cultural heritage; 2012c, 200).

One significant mode of effectuating this "difference projection" is in tourism's imposition of categories, both "creating differences" and simultaneously "sorting them out" (Hollinshead in Amoamo 2009, 14; Nogués-Pedregal 2012b, 57; 2012c, 193), and this is all too reminiscent of the colonial impetus and its "economic structures, cultural representations and exploitative relationships", especially where the "construction of […] identity within a tourism environment [is] predominantly governed by Eurocentric ideologies" (Hall and Tucker 2004, 185; Amoamo 2009, 4). Much of this identity construction of both spaces and their inhabitants rests on the relationship between desire and the "exotic", for d'Hauteserre, "a thin parody of the colonial experience", where tourist sites hereby become "cultural manuscripts", palimpsests of meanings imposed "in the broad geopolitics of Western superiority" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in d'Hauteserre 2004, 237). The choice of how to depict these spaces is never innocent and is tied up in the gaze and the overwriting of meaning, and, disturbingly, in Meiu et al.'s notion of an "ethnocommodity", where ethnicity gets its perceived value from its desirable "quality of difference" from powerful, centered whiteness (and patriarchy; d'Hauteserre 2004, 237; Meiu et al. 2020, 16-17).

We have to admit that, just like tourist guidebooks, Academic Travel, too, sets us up for the meaning to be derived from spaces, directs the gaze and "designs" what to see and how to see it. This notion of curation and selection is inherent to the "syllabus" per se, as Huggan identifies, where syllabi, and particularly "fetishized" syllabi "may also adhere to the ossifying logic of the reproducible list […] of cultural capital within an institutional context" (2001, 248-252). Similarly, we have to tread carefully in power contexts on Academic Travel and be humble enough to acknowledge the dangers inherent in "curated gazing", for "seeing is so much a part of touristic experience and […] the manipulation of the imagery is so important in the marketing of tourism" (Cheong and Miller 2000, 376). Both in marketing and in making meaning, the gaze and the control of sites and their inhabitants are "socially ordered and systematised", precisely because, in all the forms of travel I reference here, we are directed to gaze on certain things by materials: from "tourist managers", from institutions, from organizations, or indeed from the courses themselves (Urry 2002, 1, 10; Amoamo 2009, i).

In the two experiences of my CLCS classes that I outline in the following section, this is also, and importantly, where the function of the guide comes in. As Cheong and Miller (2000, 384) caution: "Tourists see through [guides'] eyes, as they choose the objects of interest to be viewed and steer attention to the selected objects […] tourists will not see what guides prefer they ignore. […] They construct the gaze through their special expertise, esoteric 'local knowledge', and abilities." Cheong and Miller go on to explain how the guide's agenda is imprinted on the tourist through this gaze mechanism and through managed interaction with surrounding local actors, as

well as how the tourist's desire to align with the guide's thinking may be an outcome of this web under positive circumstances, when the tourist is, for example "sensitive to the stigmatized identity of the 'Ugly Tourist/American'" (2000, 384). My two CLCS travels had contrasting on-the-ground experiences in this vein, which I will discuss below, and we discovered, resultantly, that these feelings are very dependent on who is the object and who is the subject of the gaze – namely in terms of the identity of the guide in relation to the area, the tour and the locals. As multiple commentators attest, the ability to "challenge the "white gaze" and turn it on itself exists in tourism practice (Hollinshead in Amoamo 2009, 19). The (potential) critical contribution of locals to tourist identity also plays a role here – for Cheong and Miller, they may be able to exert "social control": "they observe tourists, making inferences about their aspirations and judgements about their behaviour", and this impact is enhanced because they are not involved in a service relationship with these tourists, and "consequently have the option of behaving as host, becoming antagonistic, or exhibiting utter indifference" – if they are able to return the gaze (Cheong and Miller 2000, 384; Amoamo 2009, 18-19).

While the above modes and reflections address tourism as a continuation of the colonial system, I would argue that the idea of "postcolonial" tourism as *practice* is always already founded in a potentially problematic search for authenticity, both in the self, as a "better" kind of tourist and in the space/time being explored and the interactions with guides and locals within that space. For a consideration of Academic Travel in the contexts of postcolonial cities and power and representation, this is key. Being a "better", more engaged, "authentic", academically-informed and ethical kind of tourist is what we aspire to on Academic Travel, but frankly this is also something of a conceit on our part, and therefore perhaps some of the shock factor comes when we are put in a situation that teaches us that we are not really better than other tourists:

> Authentic tourism is predicated on tourists' desire to project themselves as authentic individuals rather than as members of some tourist class […]. Tourists who see themselves as authentic will experience the world differently from tourists who see themselves as members of a tour group or who identify with some generalised tourist persona. (Reisinger and Steiner 2006, 488)

When we are inauthentic, on the other hand, "our possibilities are 'averaged and leveled down' to accommodate the experiences of those who share our identity" (Reisinger and Steiner 2006, 488-89). I would argue that, for better or for worse, Academic Travel, and indeed educational travel programs generally, are about wanting to be an authentic tourist, and (to experience) challenging spaces. This "search for authenticity" takes us beyond the "staged" and leads us into a "backstage", as Jaguaribe and Hetherington identify in the case of favela tours in Rio: "a space that is more truthful than the artifice of the hotel beach, or other tourist site [where] the sense of 'packaging' is diminished because the local people are not 'performing' for foreign eyes. Rather, it is the space that performs" (Jaguaribe and Hetherington 2004, 163-64). Obviously, however, this is deeply problematic in the sense that we are speaking of a lived space with people in it, and the reading of that space is always already managed from outside.[12]

As my colleague Brack Hale has acknowledged, writing about sustainable travel in conjunction with our own Academic Travel program and educational travel programs generally, as incursions into "authentic" backstage spaces, ETPs go further into backstage areas and go there more often, with potentially damaging effects (2019, 252). The frontstage/backstage dichotomy is characterized by David Weaver in a way that ethically confronts the desire for authenticity in conceptions of "postcolonial" travel: "Elements of the local culture are offered to tourists in

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[12] This is even more so the case in situations like the one Jaguaribe and Hetherington describe, which are nothing short of "poverty" or "slum" tourism. See also Selinger and Outterson (2010), Dürr and Jaffe (2012), Burgold and Rolfes (2013) and Booyens and Rogerson (2019) on the questionable ethics of these tourist incursions.

commodified form within the frontstage", and this spares the backstage, which should remain a "traditional" area protected from "the conventional tourist gaze", a space "where local residents can retreat and recuperate after their exposure to tourists in the frontstage" – and this is why the impact of any incursion is so great (Weaver 2006, 155; Hale 2021, 3). In other words, in a postcolonial power and representational sense, backstage spaces are what Tuhiwai Smith calls "the spaces in which people live and make sense of their lives", and, following Hale, "despite [the] potentially lifelong benefits for student participants in ETPs" that this perceived authenticity brings, it comes at a cost to the local environments themselves and their inhabitants (Hale 2019, 246). Both of the areas in question in my two Academic Travels are (or were) backstage – La Goutte d'Or perhaps especially because of its location next to the major frontstage site of Montmartre.

Bringing the "postcolonial" (as resistance practice) to tourism should challenge the essentializing categories created by the "Western constructions of travel and tourism […] demand[ing in turn] a contested and subverted response through narratives of subalterns, women, and other groups that are marginalized and even expunged by neocolonial relationships and structures" (d'Hauteserre 2004, 238-39). Direct contact with these groups "resist[s] erasure" and enables a contestation of colonial narratives – d'Hauteserre calls this a "metonymic rapport" (2004, 238-39). However, it can simultaneously bring questions as to who is in control of the narrative. Precisely in this making visible of elided narratives there can be an ambivalence in terms of who is (managing the) talking, who is showing off this backstage area, and how, as I will explore below.

As Hall and Tucker declare in their introduction to their volume *Tourism and Postcolonialism*: "Any understanding of the creation of a destination [...] involves placing the development of the representation of that destination within the context of the historical consumption and production of places and the means by which places have become incorporated within the global capital system" (2004, 8). This suggests their approach to an ethical "postcolonial" tourism is one that employs the postcolonial, in awareness for historical systems and their persistence, to critique commodified postcoloniality, and I will explore the disjunctures and possibilities of this practice through the specific situations we encountered on our two walking tours, the sites where all of this worthy theory "grates and bleeds" on the ground: a chronotopal thickening at the border, in the empir(e)ical.

WHERE "POSTCOLONIAL" TRAVEL GRATES AND BLEEDS – AND SCABS?

Academic Travel arguably does "postcolonial" travel in both of the ways I put forward above, namely both in developing the tools to identify the colonial systems of the tourism industry, using education "to reveal and resist colonialism's continuing hold on our imagination" (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia 2006, 257), and in attempting to travel "postcolonially" in practice, with all of the ambiguities this entails, not least its problematic quest for authenticity. Writing about the tourist impulse to explore "other" spaces, Nogués-Pedregal (2012c, 200) uses the Bakhtinian idea of the chronotope, and I find this compelling in terms of the complex web of time-space relationships we encountered and entered into on both walking tours, and which ultimately propelled our readings of what was going on "on the ground." While Bakhtin of course prioritized the notion of literary chronotopes, not only does Alastair Renfrew, writing about his ideas, point out that "time and space are the coordinates also of *history*", but I would also further make the argument that a walking tour is always already a narrative event, given that, after H. Porter Abbott, "narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events" (Renfrew 2015, 122; Abbott 2002, 13). The idea of representation is especially important here, in the sense of layers and modes of telling, for Bakhtin tells us that "the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation" (1981, 250), and it follows that this is a representation that we, in turn, experience and interpret. Indeed, Joan Scott (in Dunn 2004, 486) concludes of the tourist experience that: "Experience is at once always already an interpretation

and is in need of interpretation. […] it is always […] political." In this reading, experience, in effect, holds the potential of a means of resistance, it forms its own narrative field, that then aligns, or does not, with the narratives that surround it, in this case, with the actual and narratival "material" of the walking tours we engaged in and with. Beginning with a brief overview of the two walking tours themselves, I will then address a series of different spatial and temporal narratival factors brought into play in the (politicized) interpretation of our experience(s).

For our walking tour of the Afrikanisches Viertel, we met Mnyaka Sururu Mboro of Berlin Postkolonial at the U Rehberge metro station (close to the "Togo" communal gardens and Togostraße). As we walked the circuit of streets of the Afrikanisches Viertel with him, Mboro told us about how each street sign related to events and figures from German colonial history, also employing supporting materials (images and short texts provided by Berlin Postkolonial). The tour, having looped around the streets of the Afrikanisches Viertel, ended with a return to Togostraße and a discussion in a side room of the Each One Teach One (EOTO) e.V. organization, an organization founded "in the context of Black resistance movements critical of racism", and now a "community-based education and empowerment project in Berlin", (EOTO 2023)[13] for a Q&A and to talk about Mboro's work and look at the supporting materials more closely.

Our Goutte d'Or tour began and ended at the ICI – we met Jacky Libaud there, did a circuit of the area, looking at sites of resistance and early sights of Algerian presence per se, and discussing the problematics of gentrification, for example the transformation of the area's original Kabyle cafés into fancy restaurants, before ending the tour with a traditional couscous lunch in the ICI's restaurant. My notes from the tour record date after date, and highlight the names of important people in the area, poignant details of hotels for single male workers and the underground struggles of the FLN who Libaud (2021) characterized as "rul[ing]" the area in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as more recent anti-racist demonstrations and initiatives from the early 1980s.

In both cases, the students and I did not come to these walking tour experiences as "blank slates" (Dunn 2004, 487). Dunn writes that experience "is shaped by the dominant discourses, narratives and representations in circulation within their historically-specific social context" (2004, 486-87). We entered into the spaces of our experience with the additional discussions of discourse and representation we had had on campus in the weeks prior to both travels, in particular extracts from Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*, and readings on power and representation in museum and gallery displays. In the German case (CLCS 238T) we had also touched on cultural memory in postcolonial spaces, and had specifically read Brenda Yeoh (2001) on postcolonial cities and Jennifer Engler's 2013 article on street signs. This reading that we did was set to coalesce with the outcomes of the Postcolonial Studies minor – in both cases I drew on Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 for the preparatory weeks of the course, with the aim of moving us towards the acquisition of "an understanding of […] *postcolonial texts and theories*."

The seven to nine preparatory weeks we have within the overarching context of our Academic Travel program, on campus and before our departure, ensure that no participant can be a truly blank slate. In our present cases we had consciously undertaken readings set to align with the empirical, so in effect we were coming to the space, in a chronotopal sense, with the "history" of that reading, with something of our own narrative and, implicitly, with our modes of reading that space already "activated." For better or for worse, we could not have had an "objective experience" as Dunn puts it, also quoting Stuart Hall, for "travellers […] are not sponges that assimilate […] narratives and discourses uncritically. Rather, they arrive at understandings through the negotiation of a range of discursive networks" (Dunn 2004, 487). In carrying our discourse readings of Empire into the empirical, our narrative(s) would always synergize or clash with those encountered on site.

[13] "im Kontext Schwarzer-, rassismuskritischer Widerstandsbewegungen"; "ein Community-basiertes Bildungs- und Empowerment-Projekt in Berlin", see https://eoto-archiv.de/ueber-uns/

Cheong and Miller caution that: "In examining power relationships, […] the first Foucauldian task is to identify the targets and the agents that structure the differentiated positions of individuals in a localized institution/system" (2000, 376). We had different modes of arrival at the starting points for these tours in the first place. This also comes down to the institutions or organizations and websites in question. Here, the crux of the problem is the implicit "structuring" of who are "tourist attractions" and who are "tourist managers" within a given space (Amoamo 2009, i). These contemporary dynamics tend to repeat how past discourses manifest in the postcolonial present, namely through "economic structures, cultural representations and exploitative relationships" should the tour be institutionalized (Hall and Tucker 2004, 185). Further, I would argue that d'Hauteserre's concept of the disruptive metonym, where those "marginalized and even expunged by neocolonial relationships and structures" can push past epistemic control to manage a tour experience, is of significance in our experience(s), from the beginning (2004, 238-39).

For a walking tour with Berlin Postkolonial, it is necessary to email the organization and arrange with Christian Kopp and Mboro a date and time. Now subsumed under Dekoloniale, there is no specific tour website, rather the information about the tours is built into discussions of project and member biographies.[14] In terms of institutions and organizations, Berlin Postkolonial itself is an NGO, as is the 2012-founded EOTO, in which our post-tour discussion was held. The siting of our discussion in an EOTO side room is spatially important: from our group only one person (me) was able to go to the door of the main building of the EOTO to get the key and gain entry to the side room because they were holding a youth project session providing a safe space for young Black people to connect, and our presence in their main space at that time, as an almost exclusively white group, would have represented a major incursion.

"Algeria in the Goutte d'Or" is a bookable tour *among* other tours on a website. Touring La Goutte d'Or in different ways (especially ways characterized on the ICI website as "thematic") makes one aware of it as "different", and, narratively, as per Nogués-Pedregal (2012c, 200), as a(nother) neighborhood, whose "variance" is "attractive", but whose marketing cannot help but remind of the Turkish-German writer Emine Sevgi Özdamar's comments about the creation of colonies in one's own land (2001, 95). Many of the tour titles in question, as they are listed on the website, arguably produce narrative echoes of "exotic" space and the commodification of marginality: "Château Rouge, Little Africa in Paris"; "Algeria in the Goutte d'Or"; "Islam in the Goutte d'Or"; "Spirituality in the Goutte d'Or"; "Popular uprisings"; "Golden women"; "Street Art Stroll"; "Cultural Heritage of the Goutte d'Or"; "Wax and Fashion in the Goutte d'Or"; "Tasting Tour"; "Goutte d'Or: A Space of Beauty". The overarching texts of the general tour offerings and the specific tour I chose for us read as follows:

> **Discover the Goutte d'Or**
> Book a thematic group tour of the Goutte d'Or in Paris and discover the economic dynamism and cultural diversity of the capital's most multicultural neighborhood, within walking distance of Montmartre.
> Let yourself be carried away through the Goutte d'Or's history and experience its strong sense of hospitality and solidarity, taking you through various quirky[15] locations including food shops and local artisan shops.
>
> […]
>
> **Algeria in the Goutte d'Or**
> Since 1914, the arrival of North Africans, notably Algerians, has spurred development in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood. This tour tracks the history of the

[14] See, for example, the Dekoloniale programming site: https://dekoloniale.de/en/program/calendar

[15] I am interested by the English translation of "quirky" for the term "insolite", as I actually find the English term, while patronizing, less problematic.

Goutte d'Or and its shared identities, stopping at vintage stores selling *raï* cassettes, musical cafés, and restaurants.

A 2 hour visit with your guide, Jacky Libaud.[16]

On the English-language version of the ICI tours page, the "Algeria in the Goutte d'Or" tour is further accompanied by an image of an Algerian flag, softly lit and superimposed with sparkling lights: it is visually "ethnocommodicized."

The ICI has only two guides who share all of the tours listed above, and it does not have information about them and their backgrounds and expertise on its website. In the case of the Afrikanisches Viertel, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, on the other hand, is clearly sited in and introduced via Berlin Postkolonial project and biography information as having come to Berlin from Tanzania to study in 1978 and remained. One of the founding members of Berlin Postkolonial and one of the foremost figures in the struggle for the return of human remains, including those of his own ancestors, from museum and other institutional sites in Germany, most notably the controversial Humboldt Museum,[17] in the sense of d'Hauteserre, this makes of Mboro a metonym for Tanzanian cultural history and for resistance to colonial systems past and present (Just Listen! 2023).

In terms of the tour experience, interactions (or lack thereof) of our tours with locals also contributed to both discomfort and solidarity construction with the spaces and with our guides in two very distinct ways. At one point on our Goutte d'Or tour we were offered water by a representative of an Algerian organization we were standing outside, who was curious about the nature of the tour. For the rest, locals either demonstrated indifference or gazed on us, heightening our discomfort at our obvious incursion on their squares, cafés and public spaces. At more than one point on the tour, Libaud warned us of the threat of "isolated minors" (2021). In Berlin, the discomfort came from a different angle, and enhanced the relationship of solidarity with Mboro and his message. As noted above, the Afrikanisches Viertel also has its own organization opposing these memory incursions, the Initiative Pro Afrikanisches Viertel – and their opposition is often active, as in the case of the student experience cited above, which relates the throwing of a raw egg at Mboro (Jacobs and Sprute 2019, 115). In 2018 our tour only experienced the occasional audible hostile muttering and a lot of staring, but in 2015 we were shouted at in a hostile exchange at the Togo garden community. For the postcolonial class the experience of being shouted at *with* Mboro and our desire to align with him at that moment is not unproblematic, allowing, as it did, the mostly settler colonials among us to sidestep our own positionality in a (post)colonial context. In the case of both tours, local chronotopes fundamentally aided us to better understand both our own experience and the impact of the colonial past on the lived present.

Bakhtin writes that "[t]he general characteristic of […] interactions [among and within chronotopes] is that they are *dialogical* (in the broadest sense of the word)" (Bakhtin in Renfrew 2015, 127). As listener-readers coming into all of the ideas and experiences that make up the time/space of the tours themselves, the idea of the chronotope seems to allow for us, history, locals, institutions and guides at that time/space nexus, with an overarching "output" of "conceiving of the narrative(s) of history beyond – but not separate from – the […] text" (Renfrew 2015, 128). While I am aware that this is yet another application of Western theory to try to understand postcolonial situations, the engagement seems productive precisely because of its

[16] I am quoting from the English versions of the tour descriptions here because the majority of the students were not studying French, and the tour itself was conducted in English. The ICI's French descriptions of the overarching Goutte d'Or tours and the specific Algeria tour are located here: https://www.institut-cultures-islam.org/l-ici/ and here: https://www.institut-cultures-islam.org/ici-la-goutte-dor/ Further materials in English on the tours can be viewed here: https://www.institut-cultures-islam.org/en/ici-la-goutte-dor/

[17] See also Susanne Memarnia (2021), "Die Tote zu Hause beerdigen" ("Burying the Dead at Home"), an interview with Mnyaka Sururu Mboro.

empiricism – it allows for Hall and Tucker's positing of an ethical postcolonial tourism that makes visible its systems and "plac[es] the development of the representation of that destination within the context of the historical consumption and production of places and the means by which places have become incorporated within the global capital system" (2004, 8).

As I discussed above, the *un*remarkability of the Afrikanisches Viertel creates a "lack" of sites – and this frustrates its reading as an exotic commodity, promoting instead a productive focus on memory. Drawing on Doreen Massey, Förster et al. have already emphasized ideas of space/time in the area: that of Initiative Pro Afrikanisches Viertel-aligned locals, "an essentialised notion of space and place that draws on an affective idea of home and on localism in order to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' and leave 'others' on the outside", and that of the journey into cultural memory, "which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world", and the implications of this for the present (Massey in Förster et al. 2016, 11). Mboro's narrative and the visual aids he provided functioned as intense points linking past and present, as did his own manifestation as "metonym" for a greater historio-cultural whole within this (post)colonial space. Further, our own experiences of not being central to the narrative informed our reading, both in terms of the hostile reception of locals, and, more importantly, in terms of our coming to awareness of our incursion (as an overwhelmingly white and privileged group) into backstage safe spaces for local young people. All of this situated us multiply and complexly within and thereby productively forced us to think about the enduring legacy of colonialism.

In the case of La Goutte d'Or I need to own my responsibility as a "facilitator." I had chosen that walking tour because I had thought that it would focus on traces of history and their present complexities in the same way as the walking tour in the Afrikanisches Viertel. But the "how" is paramount, and rather than entering into cultural memory, we found ourselves entering into a cultural touristic space that (re)colonized representation. The subject matter of the tour was not clear to the students because of the narrative "performance" of the tour and all of the surrounding spatio-temporal factors: where we were supposed to be exploring the traces of the past in the present, the lived space of the present and our role in that space was fundamentally too intrusive. The tour was supposed to be about (post)colonial resistance of the past – but the ICI as institution is itself constrained by the modes of its construction: institutionalized postcolonialism tends to "'steal' the voice of the postcolonial subject in its very bid to re-assess it" (Khaira in d'Hauteserre 2004, 236). It was narratival representational "voice-stealing" that produced the students' discomfort, especially when aligned with a hyperconsciousness in space – we were learning about Algerian history in a migrant space from a white French guide, a resident of an area now gentrified and characterized as multicultural and diverse, but under circumstances where, clearly, "postcolonialism and its rhetoric of resistance [had] themselves become consumer products" (Huggan 2001, 6). This is all too reminiscent of the manner in which, as Maria Amoamo writes about my own nation, "indigenous images were treated as the common property of post-settler nations, freely available for use as symbols in the construction of nationhood" (2009, 62). While La Goutte d'Or is located in French Paris and not in a settler colony as such, the institutional colonizing and gentrification of the area, as described by multiple commentators, does give pause for thought, as does the tour's entering into an uncomfortable "becoming-ethnographic" in its structures of engagement with sites of "difference."[18]

The Goutte d'Or walking tour resultantly confronted us with ourselves, in a space/time situation where we were duplicating the system, repeating the very things from the nineteenth and early twentieth century that the art and literature we were studying was challenging, in "a thin parody of the colonial experience" (d'Hauteserre 2004, 237). This is the difference from when we walked the same area with Mokrani in 2016. In our most recent iteration, the pre-reading had

[18] Here it seems pertinent to note that it was after our visit to the Archives nationales d'outre mer (the National Overseas Archives), some days later on our CLCS 247T travel, and after we had been working with their collection of colonial postcards, that the students first expressed their discomfort to me (having already discussed the tour extensively amongst themselves).

highlighted student awareness and ability to formulate the consciousness that we were "tourists on safari" (as they expressed it). To return to Nogués-Pedregal (2012a, xiv) "no social process exists independently of its practicing", and our experience empiricized Empire.

These two walking tours on "postcolonial" travels produce uncomfortable reflections for us in the sense of our acknowledgement of who we *want* to feel close to and who we *want* to feel different from, even, and especially where these desires might not align with our own subject positions in the system. In both cases, the difference with the inhabitants of the area and the alignment with the guides were enhanced, and all of this in backstage spaces overtop of people's lives. An anonymous entry in the CLCS 247T 2021 course evaluation reads:

> While I learned a lot from the Goutte d'Or walking tour, it did make me very uneasy. I don't know if it was some of what the tour guide was saying (in regards to how dangerous this particular area of Paris is as people walk by us...) or the nature of being led around on a semi-historical semi-contemporary tour of someone's neighborhood. What I learned was really interesting and I appreciate that I can literally map it onto where we walked, but it still feels very strange to think about. I know it made several of us quite uncomfortable, but it did get us thinking critically about how one could arrange a walking tour like this.

In La Goutte d'Or students pushed against the way in which we had become enmeshed in the very processes of representation and power we were supposed to be critiquing, finding ourselves gaining "an awareness of the *enduring legacy of colonialism* in shaping both global systems and individual ways of thinking, seeing, and understanding" from the inside, and learning that even contemporary, apparently postcolonial institutions can be complicit by their very institutionalization, and that "interdisciplinary links" of the postcolonial may also be those of ethnocommodity and postcoloniality. Ultimately, our experiences within these webs of narrative made clear to us that "*ethical academic citizenship"* must involve a hyperawareness of directions of knowledge production least it commit epistemic violence on the ground.

CONCLUSIONS: EMPIR(E)ICAL MIGHT

In a situation where we must acknowledge that the tools of Western theory will not work in an institutionalized sense within the academy to "decolonize what the Master built" (Tuhiwai Smith 2021, 22), the present study seems to suggest that there is value in "taking it outside" and combating the postcolonial in the "vernacular" and in modes specific to lived localities (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia 2006, 257). While Bahri's call for a "projection of symbolic educational issues into a larger frame of reference" – in other words, into a space which I would like to call the empir(e)ical – clearly produces Brydon's "difficult forms of knowing", and implicates us, often uncomfortably, in our own practice, we cannot miss the opportunity that Academic Travel provides in giving us the possibility to engage, and to "critically theorize" our pedagogy on the ground (Bahri 1997, 294; Brydon, 2013, 4). As Edward W. Said advocates, "the crossing of boundaries […] can […] provide us with new narrative forms or, in John Berger's phrase, with other ways of telling" (1989, 225). Whose tellings we consciously enable ourselves to listen to, enter into, and engage with as cultural readers in an empir(e)ical context is crucial.

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BIOGRAPHY

Kate Roy teaches in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Germanic Studies at Franklin University Switzerland. She studied German and French at the University of Otago/Te Whare Wānanga o Ōtākou and at the University of Manchester, and has published articles and edited volume contributions on diasporic and (post)colonial literature in both languages, as well as editing an earlier volume of *intervalla* on the theme of borders, and co-editing (with Lyn Marven and Andrew Plowman) the volume *The Short Story in German in the Twenty-First Century*. Her current research is focused on comparative studies in postcolonial literatures and cultures and she is committed to learning critically engaged and ethical teaching and research practices for Postcolonial Studies inside and outside of the classroom.

Traveling in Morocco from Front to Back Spaces as a Way to Deflect the Tourist Gaze

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ABSTRACT
What happens when a travel leader decides to distance himself and the group of students he is leading from front regions to embrace back regions, namely spaces that are not promoted by the tourist industry? In other words, what happens when a travel leader tries to deflect the "tourist gaze" (Urry)? Is it a search for an ever evanescent notion of authenticity? In addition, what can this investigation of "deviance" from the normalized tourist tours reveal about the students' ability to embrace different social practices and question their own? These are the main questions this essay aims at answering.

KEY WORDS
Tourist Gaze, Front and Back Regions, Authenticity, Simulacra, Gnawa Sufi Brotherhood Performance, Experiential Learning, Culture of Safetyism

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When someone mentions Morocco as a tourist destination, several cities, monuments, cultural artifacts, culinary traditions and images cross our minds. Obviously, depending on one's country of origin and one's knowledge about Morocco, these images may be different from one individual to the next. However, there seem to be unchanging characteristics that tend to be heard when depicting this country. Among them, the four imperial cities (Rabat, Fes, Meknes, Marrakech) that must be visited, Moroccan cuisine with its couscous and tagine, arts and crafts, with its carpet weavers, pottery makers, and tanneries, and finally Morocco's spectacular scenery, with the Sahara Desert, the Atlas Mountains, and its 3500 kilometers of coastline. These unchanging characteristics are subject to what John Urry and Jonas Larsen have defined in their eponymous book as "the tourist gaze." In other words, they correspond to what tourists have been trained to experience when they visit Morocco: "the concept of the gaze highlights that looking is a learned ability" in the sense that there is nothing natural in the way tourists look at these cities, eat these dishes, and shop for these items. As a matter of fact, when people visit a tourist destination, they gaze at it "through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires, and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 1, 2).

When I embarked on my first Academic Travel to Morocco in 2005, I did not have any expectations, just the desire to discover a new place. The Dean at the time had asked me to step in and replace a travel leader who was scheduled to lead the Academic Travel to Morocco. No personal experiences or memories would condition my gaze as I had never been there before, just texts I would have my students read in preparation for the travel whose focus was the role played by music in defining Moroccan culture. As soon as I arrived in Casablanca, I understood that the official guide who was to accompany us throughout the Academic Travel would direct my gaze and tell my students and I what was worth looking at.[1] For instance, in Marrakech, we went to "Chez Ali Marrakech." A quick look at Chez Ali's webpage states: "Depuis presque 40 ans, le Restaurant Chez Ali propose à ses hôtes un spectacle folklorique mêlant chants et danses traditionnelles, fantasia et voltige équestre. Dans un décor digne des contes des mille et une nuits, vous serez envoûté par le folklore marocain légendaire, vous mangerez, écouterez et assisterez à un divertissement reconstituant les célébrations ancestrales berbères" (For almost 40 years, Restaurant Chez Ali has been offering their guests a folkloric show with traditional singing and dancing, fantasia, and equestrian acrobatics. In a setting worthy of the *One Thousand and One Nights* tale*s*, you will be spellbound by the legendary Moroccan folklore while eating, listening, and attending a show that recreates the Berber ancestral celebration).[2] This particular show corresponded to what Daniel J. Boorstin (1964) has named "pseudo-events", which stand in stark contrast with reality. As explained by John Urry and Jonas Larsen, "Isolated from the host environment and the local people, mass tourists travel in guided groups and find pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying 'pseudo-events' and disregarding the 'real' world outside" (2011, 7-8). One of the events offered at Chez Ali is the *fantasia*, a traditional horsemanship show that, as it is being re-presented, has nothing to do with this particular social practice. Indeed, *fantasias* usually take place to celebrate a wedding, a birth, but in particular a saint during cultural and religious festivals known as *moussem*.[3] The religious dimension of a *fantasia* is being ignored at Chez Ali, further plunging the gazer into an event that smacks of Orientalism.[4]

Boorstin's denunciation of "pseudo-events" was part of a discussion he had titled "the lost art of travel", but most of all part of a reflection around the concept of authenticity. As Heitmann states, "it can be argued that authenticity has become such a flexible and changing concept that its

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[1] I would like to state clearly here that this is not specific to Morocco.

[2] For more information about Chez Ali, see their website at https://chezalimarrakech.com/. The reader will note that Chez Ali, before being a place for cultural events, is first and foremost a restaurant.

[3] A *moussem* is a regional festival that combines a religious celebration honoring a saint on the one hand and festivities and commercial activities on the other.

[4] Among the many artists examined by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, Eugène Delacroix holds a prominent place. See for example the painting entitled *Fantasia Arabe*, dated 1833.

entire existence is in question" (2011, 57). I would like nonetheless to go over the main arguments about this concept to demonstrate where Academic Travel at Franklin University Switzerland may stand in terms of authenticity. A quick way to discard the idea of authenticity is to think that we live in a globalized and consumerist world where objects, souvenirs, intangible products such as performances are commodified, reduced to goods whose value boils down to an exchange value. Tourists buy souvenirs, attend and performances in exchange for money. Referring back to the *fantasia* at Chez Ali I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this performance was robbed of its original meaning, unbeknown to most tourists.

Since Boorstin (1964), the concept of authenticity has come to be theorized in different ways. As far as he was concerned, tourists were to be opposed to travelers. The former were passive, traveled "in guided groups, thrive[d] on contrived attractions and [were] isolated from the locals and host environment" (Heitmann 2011, 47). The latter were "active and exploring" (2011, 47). Could this distinction apply to Franklin University students? In order to answer this question, Erving Goffman's structural division of social establishments into front and back regions turns out to be quite helpful. Dean MacCannell borrowed this conceptualization of space, but went further than this front/back binary approach. He found that "in tourist settings, between the front and the back there is a series of special spaces designed to accommodate tourists and to support their beliefs in the authenticity of their experiences" (MacCannell 1973, 589). He then came up with a series of different stages that explain how tourists, through the different activities they experience, can move from a front region to a back region in search of authenticity. The closer to a back space tourists get, the closer they may experience authenticity. However, the last and sixth stage of this continuum is "rarely – if ever – reached" (Heitmann 2011, 49). Tourists are then bound to experience one of the previous five stages that are part of what MacCannell (1973) calls "staged authenticity".

The staged authenticity of the events my students and I were exposed to during my first travel to Morocco definitely belonged to "spaces manipulated and managed to accommodate tourists" (Heitmann 2011, 49), in other words to front regions/spaces/stages. Entitled "Listening to Morocco: Music between Tradition and Modernity", the Academic Travel aimed at developing "an appreciation of Morocco's cultural heritage through its music."[5] Two concerts during this trip were scheduled, one with the "Conservatoire de Musique" of Fes for an Arab-Andalusian music performance,[6] the other, a Sufi music concert with the Aissawa brotherhood, a religious Islamic mystical order.[7] As I was calling Mohamed Briouel, the director and conductor of the Arab-Andalusian music Orchestra to finalize the organization of our concert, my guide approached me and asked me what the conditions of this performance were. He was concerned with two aspects: would we have dinner, which later reminded me of what was to happen at Chez Ali, and how much did it cost? This all may sound anecdotal to the reader, but I must unfold the thread of this whole event in order to show how the tourist industry operates and the reasons that pushed me later to find cultural activities that would deflect the tourist gaze. When I told my guide that we would not be served dinner and announced the price of the performance, he threw his arms up in the air and told me it was much too expensive and that he could find the exact same performance with dinner for much less. Our guide was inscribing himself in a postmodern society where "consumption […] becomes the dominant driver […] and tourism […] becomes a commodity to be consumed" (Heitmann 2011, 52).[8]

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[5] The desire to deflect the gaze came after this very first Academic Travel to Morocco.

[6] Arab-Andalusian music is the official music of Morocco. The Arab-Andalusian music orchestra is presently directed by Mohamed Briouel (my interlocutor since 2005), disciple of Haj Abdelkrim Rais, the founder of this orchestra in 1946.

[7] After this first experience, I decided to reshape this Academic Travel and Franklin University Switzerland students have now the opportunity to see up to seven concerts in eleven days.

[8] For instance, in Fes, in lieu of a cultural visit that could have included a stop at the University of al-Qarawiyyin, the oldest university in the world, our guide took us to the tanneries, the carpet weavers and

I therefore called Mohamed Briouel and cancelled on him, to my great shame retrospectively speaking. Indeed, once in Fes, we were taken to a place where I immediately noticed an abundance of French tourists which meant that the social relationships between hosts and guests were determined according to precise standards. We were occupying a front stage, in other words a tourist bubble where visitors "not only expect western standards of accommodation and food, but also bilingual staff and well-orchestrated arrangements" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 62). In lieu of an Arab-Andalusian music orchestra, we had two violinists and a player of *darbouka* sitting on a small stage and facing mostly indifferent tourists. Where were the *kanoun*, the *oud*, the *rabab*, musical instruments that characterize Arab-Andalusian music?[9] I felt cheated, all the more so when the guide handed me the bill at the end of the "show", as it was not significantly lower than what I would have paid for the real performance. The next day, I called the restaurant and listed all the different components of the event, including the menu. I almost fell from my chair when I was told the real price of the tourist event we had attended the night before. When I went downstairs to get on the bus, our guide was waiting for me at the reception, asking me to pay the restaurant bill. I flatly told him I would only pay the price he really paid at the restaurant.

This pseudo-event was the triggering episode that led me to decide I would never rely on a guide again in an attempt to deflect the tourist gaze. Instead of reducing my students' experience to a visual one, I would try my utmost to focus as much as I could on "other senses and bodily experiences" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 14).[10] Among the Sufi performances (Gnawa; Aissawa; H'madcha) my students have been attending since I reshaped my course in 2007,[11] I would like to focus on Gnawa music with *maâlem* (master) Abdenbi El Meknassi and outline the main components of a Gnawa performance in order to demonstrate how it deflects the tourist gaze. Born in 1960 in Meknes, Abdenbi El Fakir, known as El Meknassi in reference to his town of origin, is a professional musician who not only performs the traditional Gnawa repertoire with his group, but also more contemporary styles of Gnawa music, in Morocco and abroad.[12]

I met Abdenbi El Meknassi in 2008 as I was scouting for activities to do on my Academic Travel. After I explained to him its focus, he offered to open his home to my groups each time I traveled to Morocco in the future. This implied that we would enter into a private space that is off limits to tourists, and it would allow us to distance ourselves from a front region whose main purpose is to accommodate tourists. In other words, attending a *lila*,[13] the highly ritualized Gnawa ceremony, in a private home meant we would not be "isolated from the host environment and the local people" (Urry and Larsen 2011, 7).

As a Gnawa, Abdenbi El Meknassi has always played music in a sacred as well as in a secular context. Within the sacred context, a ceremony is organized for people (mostly women) who need to be at peace with the spirits that inhabit them and for locals who want to listen to Gnawa music and provide support to the women who will trance-dance (Kapchan 2007, 2-3). In

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the pottery-making shops, hoping my students would be in a consumption mode which would allow him to get a commission by the same token.

[9] A *darbouka* is a type of drum made of clay covered with goat skin. A *kanoun* is a thin, flat, and trapeze-like string instrument that rests on the instrumentalist's lap while he plays. An *oud* is a string instrument that resembles a lute. A *rabab* is a bowed string instrument.

[10] The notion of the tourist gaze has been critiqued for reducing the tourist experience to sightseeing (Urry and Larsen 2011, 14). See for instance Harvey C. Perkins and David C. Thorns' "Gazing or Performing?: Reflections on Urry's Tourist Gaze in the Context of Contemporary Experience in the Antipodes" and Nigel Thrift's *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect.* In the latest edition of their book, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, Urry and Larsen rethink "the concept of the tourist gaze as performative, embodied practices" (2011, 14).

[11] Since my first experience in Morocco in 2005, I have led this Academic Travel every two years, except in 2021 due to COVID restrictions.

[12] In 2018, for instance, he performed during the *Festival Gnaoua Musiques du Monde*, a festival celebrating the Gnawa culture that has been taking place in Essaouira on a yearly basis since 1998.

[13] *Lila* means night in Moroccan Arabic.

her own ethnographic study of such a ceremony, Zineb Majdouli explains that the possessed person for whom the ceremony was organized had staunchly refused "d'avoir une présence non musulmane dans sa cérémonie" as such a person could "attirer le courroux des esprits" (to have a non-Muslim presence attending her ceremony, as such a person could attract the wrath of the spirits; 2007, 37).[14] Abdenbi El Meknassi dismisses this division between a *lila* and a performance done for non-Muslim and foreign audiences. All *lila* are sacred for him, no matter if some members of the audience are non-Muslims.

Figure 1: Abdenbi El Meknassi playing his *guembri* (March 2009)

Another important aspect to consider when trying to deflect the tourist gaze is the relation to time. Tourism, despite being a leisure activity, can be highly structured and program-dependent, as it is the case with Franklin University's Academic Travel program. Professors need to provide students with a schedule. Attending a *lila* entails that there cannot be a schedule. Time is not clock time any longer, it is spiritual time that knows no limits. We usually arrive around 8:00pm and then hardly anything happens for some time, but for the tea and pastries that are prepared for all the participants, symbolic of hospitality in any Moroccan home. Students look at each other, talk to each other but I can usually sense some of them being in a state of frustration. Then begins the first part of the *lila*, the *âada*, a procession that is going to take the participants from the public to

[14] Gnawa music is devotional music, "it is sacred music by dint of its words, which praise and solicit blessing from God, the prophet, particular Islamic saints, as well as a pantheon of both sub-Saharan and North African, Islamic and non-Islamic spirits. The music is considered so powerful that at one time it was thought that singing the songs outside of the ceremonial context would incite the wrath of the spirits, who would then exact retribution in the form of afflicting the transgressor" (Kapchan 2007, 22).

the private spheres. We all get up and proceed into the street, following Abdenbi El Meknassi and his musicians. According to Zineb Majdouli, "il s'agit d'un moment liminal marqué par l'attente du moment sacré: on annonce et prépare ce moment mais sans y être encore. Même dans une ambiance conviviale, les convives sont dans l'appréhension de ce qui va suivre" (it is a liminal moment characterized by the expectation of the sacred: this moment is announced and prepared but not quite there yet. Even in this friendly atmosphere, the guests feel apprehensive about what is to take place; 2007, 41).[15] As we begin to occupy the public space, locals start gathering on both sides of the street to look at the procession even if they know exactly what is about to take place. All of a sudden, Franklin University students are not gazers any longer, as they become the object of the gaze. Accordingly, we are not occupying a front space and as we proceed slowly back into the home, we get closer to a back space. The sound of the *tbel* itself, a big drum slung around the player's torso and played with carved sticks by Abdenbi El Meknassi and another musician, along with the clacking of the *qraqeb* (iron castanets) are so deafening that the front space seems to dissolve itself and lose its pertinence.

Figure 2: Abdendi El Meknassi and his son playing the *tbel* during the *âada* (March 2022)

[15] In her description of the *âada*, Deborah Kapchan states that "a brass tray laden with ceramic bowls filled with different kinds of incense – black and white benzoin, myrrh, sandalwood, chips of amber, and musk – each scent intended for a different spirit or *jinn*" is carried over to the street by "the woman overseer of the ceremony, the *mqaddema*" (2007, 11). A bowl of milk and another one filled with dates, as well as candles carried by all participants are also a part of the ritual.

Once inside comes the *kouyou*, a musical part between the *âada* and the invocation of the *mluk* (the owners, the possessors of the possessed). Some of the musicians, but for the *mâalem*, start dancing in the *rehba*, an area that faces the master and later on will be reserved for the trance-dancers. Some of the dance moves can be very acrobatic while others remind the audience of the enslaved condition of the Gnawa.[16] During the *âada* and the *kouyou*, I can feel the tension slowly building among my students. The discrepancy between theory (the texts I have them read during our pre-academic travel meetings) and practice could not be more overt.

Franklin University students first attended a Gnawa performance in 2009. WhatsApp was created this very same year, YouTube was only four years old, neither Instagram nor Snapchat nor Tiktok were in existence.[17] At the time, students were not "constantly subjected to images and messages from television, the internet and other media channels" (Heitmann 2011, 52). Since I started organizing Sufi performances for my students, I have not so much relied on visuals as on texts. This entails that students do not have a clear image in their head of how the performance is going to unfold. They know the different components of a Gnawa performance, they have read about it, but I refrain from showing them images or videos found on the net as they do not necessarily represent what they are about to experience. Indeed, such ceremonies situated in back regions, in other words "spaces where private, everyday lives of the locals are given priority" (Heitmann 2011, 49), do not exist on the net and would not make sense. In sum, students who have traveled with me and continue to do so do not have a preconceived idea of what they will see.

After the *âada* and the *kouyou*, the students have the opportunity to relax, when around 10:00pm., sometimes later, several chickens are put on different tables in front of them; they exchange puzzled looks when they realize there is no cutlery and I tell them they will have to eat with their fingers. Some of them need a few minutes to adjust to this new way of eating, but as they watch their peers digging in, they join in, and I can see them enjoying their dinner, reveling in the moment they are sharing together. We again have tea, and after the tables have been cleared and cleaned, the main part of the *lila* can start.

The invocation of the *mluk* is supposed to take us until dawn. As the years go by, I have noticed that the students' endurance level to the intensity of the ritual ceremony has subsided. When I first started working with Abdenbi El Meknassi, we would leave around 5:00am. These days, around 1:00am, I need to signal to him that the students have had enough. The fast frenetic clacking of the *qraqeb,* the invocations of the *mâalem* which the other musicians respond to in unison according to a tight script, and the unfamiliar sounds of the *guembri* may sound the same after a while.[18] In order to appreciate Gnawa music, one needs to listen with one's heart. As stated by Deborah Kapchan, "in order for [perception] to be a pleasure, an inward sense is required; beyond audition, this sense is not found in the ear […], but in the heart" (2007, 43).[19] I would add that in order for a non-Muslim and a Westerner to let oneself get carried away by Gnawa, one needs to close one's eyes, block everything that is around so that the music becomes an embodied experience. Instead of being a sort of repetitive type of music, the listener is engulfed in

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[16] John Wright notes that "Morocco was probably the largest single market for imported black slaves in the Arab Maghreb" (2002, 55). Slavery in Morocco started in the eight century and ended in the early twentieth century. During the *kouyou*, the dancers make little steps as if their feet were in chains.

[17] YouTube was created in 2005, WhatsApp in 2009, Instagram in 2010, Snapchat in 2011, and TikTok in 2016.

[18] The best secular analogy I could make when I reflect upon the Gnawa ritual would be to imagine ravers dancing all night next to loudspeakers until they collapse with fatigue.

[19] Kapchan's source here is Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (c. 1058-1111), the Persian philosopher, theologian, and mystic, who in his book *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* dedicated a chapter to music and how to properly listen to it entitled "Responses Proper to Listening to Music and the Experience of Ecstasy." To access this chapter, visit the site of the Islamic Texts Society at https://its.org.uk/catalogue/al-ghazali-on-responses-proper-to-listening-to-music-and-the-experience-of-ecstasy/

soundscapes, mindscapes, and landscapes that differ from what one is used to. To each *mlek*[20] corresponds a color, an incense, a rhythm, and a trance. There are seven colors: white, black, blue, red, green, yellow, and brown. I would presently like to go over several events that happened while invoking the *mluk* whose colors are blue, red, and black, and how students reacted to them.

The invocation of the spirit of Sidi Musa (the spirit of the sea), whose color is blue, usually earns the approval of the students. As a matter of fact, it exudes peacefulness and I have never seen anyone getting into a trance when this spirit is invoked. Instead, one of the *qraqeb* musicians gets up, places a bowl of water on his head and starts dancing to the rhythm of the music as if he were diving into and swimming in the sea.

The spirit of Sidi Hamu, the spirit of the slaughter house, whose color is red, can provoke feelings of discomfort and anxiety. Indeed, it demands blood. Some trance-dancers can use knives and scarify themselves, something my students and I have never seen. However, the students have witnessed the sacrifice of an animal, usually a rooster. When the invocation starts, a *qraqeb* musician picks it up, places it upon his head, soothes it, and eventually puts it on the floor in the *rehba* so that it lies quietly on its back, facing Mecca. The music is loud, the participants are all around the dance area, next to one another, but for those who do not want to watch what they consider a "barbarous" act.[21] The rooster does not make a sound, it seems to be sleeping. Then the musician in charge of the sacrifice makes a small incision in its neck, allowing the blood to drip in a bowl that he will drink from. In 2017, the invocation of the spirit of Sidi Hamu did not sit well with some students. One of them, Samuel Miller,[22] answering the following prompt – "The Other, the idea of Otherness enables us to understand, discover, know about ourselves and our own culture. In which ways has the trip to Morocco acted as a revealer of your own self, your own cultural identity with its codes, values, and norms?" – wrote:

> Having been raised religious, and having spent a year as a novitiate in a secluded monastery after high school, I am very comfortable with the spiritual world. Going into the Gnawa performance, I had some small trepidation at being part of another religious ceremony, but decided to try to be a disinterested observer. After the chicken was killed however, everything changed. I could feel a dark presence in the room, a presence that was not friendly. It felt cold and *dangerous* (my emphasis), particularly as the music increased and the trances became more violent. Looking around at our group, I saw that Fadi, the other devoutly religious person of our group, was huddled in the back muttering prayers to himself.[23] I did the same.

Another student, Christine Snitkjaer wrote:

> The Gnawa musical performance was the experience that "challenged" me the most in relation to otherness. When I started to cry in response to the music and trance-dancing, I could not believe I was actually doing it. […]. I did not want to seem overly sensitive. At the same time, a part of me simply did not care what others were thinking. Something about the performance loosened me up to being present in the moment. It seemed as if that room was "everything" and the rest of the world did not exist. I could not "control" how I felt, no matter how badly I wished to. Initially, I wanted to say that my reaction was because the Gnawa performance

[20] *Mlek* is the singular of *mluk*.
[21] This adjective smacks of colonial semantics.
[22] All the students mentioned in this essay gave me their permission to mention their names. Samuel Miller is presently a free-lance photographer, while Christine Snitkjaer is an animation producer at Sun Creature. I chose their testimonies for their transformative dimension, as the Gnawa ceremonies they attended led them to reflect upon their own identities and/or reconsider old aspects of their identities.
[23] Fadi Al-Wazani was a Sunni Muslim from Jordan.

> "simply" was not me, that dealing with mean-spirited *mluk* and dead chickens is just not part of my world or anything I want to spend my time doing. But the more I thought about it, […], the more I realized that perhaps my reaction was more a response to my fear of "losing control" of a situation. I felt helpless during the performance – as if the world could do its own thing and there was nothing I could do to stop it. That feeling scared me. The experience has made me realize that I can't control the world, as apparent as it sounds.

This dark presence mentioned by Samuel Miller may also be felt during the invocation of the spirit of Sidi Mimun, whose color is black; it may cause some unexpected reactions as it is often accompanied by some intense trance-dancing. People who trance-dance want to accommodate and placate the spirits that inhabit them. Not doing so means that the person will permanently be afflicted with all kinds of ills and troubles. Women who trance-dance move "their heads rhythmically from side to side or up and down to the music, their hands clasped behind their backs" (Kapchan 2007, 14). Usually, the *mqaddema* or another woman wraps a sash around the trance-dancers' waists so as to make sure that they do not lose their balance and hurt themselves as they fall on the ground. They can also gyrate their heads while on their knees or on all fours, a position that is a reflection of the Gnawa's former condition as slaves.

Figure 3: A woman trance-dancing during a *lila* in 2011

This very same year (2017), a woman who was trance-dancing suddenly lost her balance.[24] Her head hit a wood and glass table heavily. We all heard a loud thud, and some students interjected an "aah" of concern and fear. Had any one of us fallen the way she did, we would immediately have touched our heads to rub the wound or check if there was blood. She did none of this, and resumed her trance-dancing, but for some students this was too much to handle and a few minutes later I had to go outside to check on them. They were holding each other, reassuring one another as a few of them were crying in a state of shock. As I mentioned previously, images, films and videos are not often used in the preparation of our Academic Travel, as we mainly rely on texts. Visual media-generated signs are not part of the construction of the experience they are about to live. As Heitmann points out, "postmodernist scholars […] argue that our relationship to reality has changed due to technological advances, primarily within the field of media" (2011, 52). One such scholar is Jean Baudrillard who in "Simulacra and Simulations" (1988, 170) explains the successive stages an image – the visual representation of an event – goes through to become a simulacrum:

1. It is the reflection of a basic reality.
2. It masks and perverts a basic reality.
3. It masks the absence of a basic reality.
4. It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum.

The more an image is being re-presented, the more it distances itself from reality. As I do not have at my disposal material pertaining to visual culture, students are not in a position to look for media-generated signs during the performance as none of these signs present themselves to them. They witness a basic reality that has not been represented, that has not been *imagified*, and accordingly has not gone through the different stages allowing it to become a simulacrum. The basic reality turns out to be much more violent than a simulacrum, hence the students' reaction.

I would like to draw a parallel between the simulacrum-basic reality chasm and MacCannell's frontstage-backstage dichotomy. The front region, as we have already seen, is meant to make tourists feel comfortable. It is arranged in such a way that tourists know what to expect. They have seen images, perused tourist brochures, read travel guides which condition the way they will experience the landscape, the art, the attraction, or the performance. As a matter of fact, all the media-driven signs are so impactful that tourists look for them once they arrive at their destination. A front region could therefore be likened to a simulacrum: it has been endlessly represented, it feels familiar and has nothing to do with a back region, a basic reality in Baudrillard's terms. Indeed, when tourists are given the opportunity to travel towards a back region, they cannot anticipate what they are about to see as there is not much information at their disposal, because a back space is not the object of representations, in contrast to a front space. Does this mean that if we are to distance ourselves from the front stage, if we are to deflect the tourist gaze, if we are to enter a back space, we should feel unsafe? Obviously not. However, we need to get out of our comfort zone and in the case of my trip to Morocco, embrace non-Western codes, norms, beliefs and values if we truly want to meet the Other. Not doing so is on the one hand embracing a culture of safetyism that Lukianoff and Haidt warns us "trumps everything" (2018, 30), and on the other, perpetuating a neo-colonial mentality in the sense that everything should correspond to Western values, codes, and norms. Samuel Miller, examining his own reaction, seems aware of this potential danger. Although he states that he "felt afraid at that performance", he sets aside the idea of feeling safe, focusing on what it means to enter a back space, its unknown dimension:

[24] According to Zineb Majdouli losing one's balance means a lack of self-control, because paradoxically a trance must be aestheticized (2007, 62). Reverting to Kapchan (2007), I would say that the trance-dancer had not been able to placate the spirit inhabiting her, hence this violent loss of balance.

> From a Western Christian tradition, I tried to rationalize what I had seen. The only English words I knew were "witchcraft", "pagan" with all the negative connotations that come with [these]. I am a Christian, culturally at least, whether I like it or not (after four years of University, I don't like it very much at all). Despite not being terribly devout – as a matter of fact, I am actively running away from religion – sitting in that room that night, the only way for me to make sense of what I was seeing was through this unused spirituality. But in doing so, I reinstalled cultural and religious walls that I had tried so hard to take down.

Samuel Miller's awareness of what may happen when tourists distance themselves from the safety of a front region and accept to enter a back region is further reflected upon when he asks the following questions: "How are we supposed to view things like this that are so foreign to our daily experience without tunneling into our identity to understand what it means? And in doing so, how do we not simply reinforce our own biases and the things that we know/believe?" He does not have answers to his questions, but concludes: "What I do know is this. I saw something that was utterly different. That was fine. But I also felt something spiritual that was likewise different, and *that was terrifying!* (My emphasis). And for the first time in years, faith/religion/Christianity made sense again." Entering a back region is transformative: it helps students confront a basic reality, it leads them to reflect upon their own identity. Such a move from front to back regions produces different narratives, as with this testimony that dates back to 2009, the first time Franklin University students attended a *lila*.

As I was getting ready to write this essay, I contacted several students who traveled to Morocco before 2013.[25] One of them, Adrian Mangiuca, wrote back a long message where he reflects about Academic Travel, the tourist gaze, and the *lila* he experienced in Meknes with Abdenbi El Meknassi.[26] His reflections summarize what Academic Travel is and can be when students are ready to embrace Otherness, enter back regions, and face basic realities:

> Academic Travel was as much about learning how to travel as it was learning how not to travel. One aspect of being a tourist in a foreign place is the insidious and unconscious fetishizing of the Other that sometimes occurs, the unintentional forcing of the subject being observed to perform in the knowledge that they are under observation by paying guests. This is the real danger with Academic Travel. It is structured as a learning experience and that learning is often conducted observationally during short periods rather than gradually and experientially. With the best of intentions, we might leave a country thinking we have "learned" something, when we have only attained a sense of flavors, colors, and impressions lacking a connecting cultural thread. It is only when we give up our own pretensions and expectations, when we exist (usually quietly) in the same space as those from whom we wish to learn that we might say we have truly "experienced" another culture.

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[25] The year 2013 corresponds with the i.generation – also called generation Z or digital generation – entering college. There is another essay still to write to explain how the millennials and the i.generation deal differently with reality. As Jean Twenge, a psychologist specializing in intergenerational differences, points out "teens are physically safer than ever, yet they are more mentally vulnerable" (2017, 3). In *The Coddling of the American Mind*, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt further explain that generation Z spends more time alone, interacting with their screens, hence having "fewer offline life experiences than […] any previous generation" (2018, 148). They add that safety has undergone "a process of 'concept creep'": "in the twentieth century, the word 'safety' generally meant physical safety", but in the past two decades, it has "expanded to include 'emotional safety'" (Lukianoff and Haidt 2018, 24).

[26] Adrian Mangiuca is presently Vice President of Infrastructure at Voyager Space Holdings, a global leader in space exploration.

> No Academic Travel I attended was more in peril of falling into this trap than Morocco, and no trip delivered more. It has been 13 years since I travelled with you and I have told the story of "travel done right" anecdotally at least three dozen times through the years with Morocco as a touchstone. I have tried to emulate my experiences in each new place after the lessons learned on that trip, the lessons that true learning happens experientially, silently, while listening, and perhaps even engaging when and where requested. It helped immensely that we knew we were meeting with your old friends, people with whom you had genuine relationships of trust. This made us all feel more like new friends and less like observers. Our engagement, our dancing, felt richer and more welcomed as a result. I suspect there is another subtle lesson I have not thought about since that time: that you make the learning more personal, and therefore more memorable, by making it intersectional with our own background. We travelled to understand the roots of music – Jazz, Blues – with which many like myself feel a deep connection. For this experience and these lessons, I thank you. I carried them forward when I moved to India for two years, I carried them forward when I moved to London for my Master's and then Ethiopia for my research. I carried them forward when I moved back to Washington DC and felt like a stranger in my own country until I found a little bar that played Bluegrass on Thursday nights.
>
> The moment in time to which I am referring is an instantiation of this lesson. You brought us to the home of your friend [Abdenbi El Meknassi], you secured an invitation for us into his home, where [before the concert], we sat cross-legged on pillows, enjoying a meal served from the home kitchen. The concert led by your friend got underway. Late in the night, an older woman came to the [*rehba*] to perform a spiritual cleansing ritual. It involved dancing and spinning wildly to the rhythm as she passed dozens of lit candles slowly across the skin of her arms. After some time, a blackout hit the city and almost by magic, nobody noticed. The woman kept dancing, the room's only light given by candles silhouetting her skin, skin that should have been burning but remained unharmed. The instruments played on, providing enough musical energy for her to keep spinning. I remember her silhouette against those candles in that darkness perfectly to this day, and our silence in witnessing it. I am not a spiritual person but it was as close as I got to transcendence.

As Gary Arndt (2011) states in "7 Reasons Why the 'Authentic' Travel Experience Is a Myth", "the very act of being somewhere means that [we] are changing the environment and removes the possibility of having a true authentic experience." However, the way this millennial student experienced the Gnawa performance was as close to an "authentic" experience as possible. My only wish is to encourage future students to embrace the unknown, the incomprehensible, the different, distance themselves from the simulacra, confront reality with open heart and soul, and finally get as close as possible to a back space each time an opportunity is given to them.

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BIOGRAPHY

Patrick Saveau is a Full Professor at Franklin University Switzerland. His work primarily focuses on the autofictional genre and its first open practitioner, Serge Doubrovksy. He published the first monograph on this author, *Serge Doubrovsky ou l'écriture d'une survie* (Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2011). He then shifted his research interests to the representation of immigration in literature and cinema and co-edited *Reimagining North African immigration. Identities in flux in French literature, television and film* (Manchester University Press, 2018). More recently, he has embarked on a research venture combining filiation narratives and Maghrebi literature, working for example on the first openly gay Moroccan writer, Abdellah Taïa.