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The Time in Time of Hospitality

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For many years now, the stories of Austrian and German guest workers have been forgotten. There has been little to no discourse reflecting on the history of imported labor. Since at least the early 1990s, even the term *gastarbeiter_in* has seemed outdated. Many efforts among activists, cultural workers and artists have been undertaken to replace it with the term *migrant*. This happened primarily as an act of self-empowerment, questioning an assigned identity stemming from Cold War labor contracts that hid the various racist implications. Speaking of migrants and not of *gastarbeiter_in* signaled a certain form of critique of official state politics that regulated labor and migration and the mainstream view of the guest workers as unwelcome intruders from elsewhere, who had to be accepted as only a cheap labor force.

Currently, however, we are facing increased interest for all those who left Eastern European countries during the 1960s and 1970s to become *gastarbeiter_in* – interest, driven first and foremost, by conservative or even right-wing politicians. In the following, I want to depart from the assumption that this newly established relation to a forgotten, unwanted past identity can only be understood as an instrumentalization of the guest worker as a figure for politics that do not regard the actual guest workers themselves (or the context

of their working conditions), but, instead focus in fact on the so-called current "crisis" of migration.[1] In those narratives, guest workers only appear as well-integrated members of their host societies. They are in fact no longer guests but have gained the right to feel at home in the former West showing that this is also possible for present-day migrants and refugees. However, it is not only conservative and right-wing politicians who cover up prevailing racism in this regard. There is also a strong desire to create political bondage between these earlier movements and the present-day flows of migration for activists, artists, migrants and refugees themselves. Therefore, my proposal here would be to rethink the structural relations between guest and host_ess and the implications of hospitality in both for writing histories of guest workers and present-day migrants and refugees. I would also like to propose hospitality as a fundamental basis for the readings and contestations of the linear narratives dominating the various histories related to guest/worker/migrant/refugee that we assume or even actively produce.

Guest workers themselves have been surrounded by negativity since their arrival in their new work surroundings: huge symbolic and legal exclusions were made in order to push them to the margins of societies.[2] Yet it is still the situation of increasing inhospitality or conditional hospitality – as Derrida calls the traditional, dominant model of hospitality – that thematizes the politics of hospitality as a mode of resistance again.[3] Furthermore, in my point of view, a rearticulation of hospitality is necessary in (capitalist) societies based on global divisions of labor, because hospitality is exactly what enables current (labor) positions of guests and host_esses through internal and temporal logics. Therefore, I will not simply reject the appropriation of someone else's history, or the creation of a narrative about labor and migration, but I will try to find a

different (temporal) model of hospitality that may allow one to listen to voices which appear very distant.

In his text, "The Temporality of Hospitality," instead of searching for alternative non-linear narratives of hospitality, literary theorist Ralf Simon writes about hospitality as an important principle of narrative itself.[4] For Simon, hospitality constitutes the "primal scene of narrative."[5] This understanding allows Simon to analyze the appearance of the guest through a scenic component. We can imagine the encounter between guest and host_ess within a very specific structural scenario following a certain dramaturgy. The story begins when the guest arrives.[6] She knocks on the door. The hostess opens the door. The guest is invited in. She enters the space. She brings a gift, and that is: she tells a story. In the end, the guest leaves. Simon develops these elements in order to be able to define the positions of guest and host_ess along the most important question that evolves around hospitality: How long should a guest stay? On the one hand, a guest must not be turned away, but if she stays too long, she will be integrated, assimilated and she will no longer be a guest, but part of the community of the host_ess. Simon claims that the guest must remain a stranger, otherwise she stops being a guest and becomes something else[7] – I would add with or without various positive or negative implications that this situation produces. The real boundary of the space of the guest is, therefore, time, since she is situated within the paradox of time – not staying and not leaving.

Simon puts a particular importance on the story told by the guest. The story can be understood as the guest's very biography, which enters the stage of hospitality in one way or another when the guest appears. The story has the function of a gift. It fulfills the expectation of the host_ess to be entertained, and for the guest to deliver, because she was welcomed. So the guest and the host_ess

sit down to talk and to listen. The narrative is doubled when the story within the story begins. This is when the setting of hospitality described as a script thus far stops in time and we enter a different temporality, that of the guest as narrator.

The question "how long should a guest stay?" transforms into the question: *how long can the host_ess listen and allow time for the guest?* The length of time is always negotiable. Time is given, time is taken, but in the concept of hospitality I describe here, time is not exchangeable. It cannot be paid back as it is beyond the economy of debt and equality. For Ralf Simon, the temporality of hospitality corresponds with the temporality of reading; as we take time to read, we are given back the gift of a story. "Hospitality offers a model to think about literature itself: literature is a guest in language."[8] In the same way, we can think of art and culture as guests in reality, as it requires taking time for their reception, recognition, and understanding. The question of how long a guest can stay is the question of how much time we take to read, to look, to reflect the linearity of our lives through stories we are told and images we are shown by someone else.

Furthermore, Simon asks more questions about this time in time and its relation to narrative.[9] Guest and host_ess inhabit two different temporal models for Simon: the time of the host_ess progresses on a linear timeline. According to the host_ess, she is in the given moment when the guest appears – this moment has a past and a future. The past changes according to the point where the host_ess stands. However, the time of the guest is an interruption in the progress of time. Her story is the time out-of-joint, time without its outer measurement. It is the time of a stable past that is collected and preserved (and presented) as memory.

What is very important to include in the "primal scene of narrative" is the component of reciprocal insecurity. It is described very well by Derrida's notion of "hostipitality" – hostility and hospitality belong together.[10] The primal scene of narrative is only a seemingly safe space. In fact, it is highly ambivalent for both sides, an encounter of two strangers with an uncertain outcome. Everything can happen within the scenario of hospitality – guest and host_ess can start fighting and hate each other, and maybe it turns out to be impossible to begin an exchange of mutual agreement. The scene does not necessarily provide a positive outcome. It includes risk and uncertainty, but as Simon claims, the structural situation is "completely necessary as a stable temporal anchor."[11] The time of the host is "fundamentally uncertain and open ended" – if linearity is never interrupted, there will never be time for reflection and a possible change of the course towards the future.[12] Linear time depends on its interruption as much as the time in time of the guest can only unfold itself within the framework of linearity and progress. Both stories stabilize each other, when they are allowed to co-exist. We need to secure ourselves in a relationally stable past, so we lend an ear to the guest's narrative or devote our time to the offerings of literature.[13] This has broader political implications, because it is only when the host_ess does not reject the narrative, which brings risk and an uncertain outcome, and remains open to the entrance of someone else's story, a hospitable society can exist. "We accept an experience of time that does not aim at any symmetrical exchange based on equivalence but instead implies aneconomic time-wasting, generous expenditure, and listening to each other."[14]

"Wir haben ein Recht auf Arbeit." "I AM A MAN." "Lezbyjka

na prezydenta."
We have a right to work. I am a man. Lesbian for president.

These are some of the slogans written onto protest banners and carried by contemporary artist, Sharon Hayes, in her action "In the Near Future" (2005–2009). "Wir haben ein Recht auf Arbeit" is a slogan from a union's protest in Vienna in the 1960s. "I AM A MAN" is a slogan from the Memphis sanitation strike that took place in 1968. "Lezbijka na prezidenta" is from a recent demonstration for LGBTIQ rights in Warsaw. Hayes selected and staged slogans from past political protests several times in public space. For a certain period of time, and for a few days in a row, she stood alone in the streets of different cities. "In the Near Future" took place in London, New York, Vienna, Warsaw and Brussels until now, but it is an open and ongoing investigation that could be repeated again in other cities.

I'm interested in this work, because it negotiates hospitality as a site of protest precisely through a non-linear narrative and a carefully scripted scenario. Hayes appears unexpectedly, unannounced in public space, and thereby creates her own audience. She is the uninvited guest in public space, just like any protester. Like a political protest formed in front of an actual government structure, forcing political representatives to listen, Hayes transforms an unidentified public into an audience. If the public allows itself to read and listen to Hayes' story, it becomes her host. But there are several elements which do not correspond to political protest as we know it.

The one-person-demonstration is the first part of the work: it takes place without public announcement and can only be experienced by those who accidentally share time and space with

the artist. The second part, or what Hayes calls the “not-event” of “In the Near Future” is an installation of photographic documents from the performance, projected by multiple slide projectors.[15] The images not only give insight into the artist’s intervention into public space, it is in fact the photographs which invoke memories of political protests that have entered collective memory and create the non-linear narrative of the performance retrospectively. In both parts, the importance of reading and listening is paramount, but also the way that Hayes deals with questions of raising one's voice and making demands.

In the live action, Hayes decided not to use her own voice in repeating slogans acoustically but to make the voices of others appear in a different way. Carrying the protest banners without shouting out loud, as is often done in demonstrations, gave those events a mute but more effective reappearance. All actions were carried out in the original locations where the same historical protests took place. However, the slogans and the locations did not correspond, and they do not correspond in the photographs either.

Hayes herself emphasizes that this work is not a performance in a theatrical sense, as it refuses any kind of spectacularity.[16] The action is decidedly undemonstrative. “Blank, dazed, and affectless, she appears as a living relic of and a witness to an outmoded and endangered form of public dissent,” writes Helena Rickitt.[17] Hayes is not only an uninvited guest, she even comes too late, she “follows the politics of action like a shadow.”[18] Nevertheless, Hayes’s body is on display and is checked in relation to the message she is carrying. Is this the body of a worker who is on strike? Or is this the lesbian who fights for her rights? Does the body correspond to the identity we have in mind when we see protesters in the street? In most cases, Hayes challenges the social

conventions that state that only those who inhabit a particular identity can fight for it.

When I saw this work for the first time, I was highly irritated. I felt as if someone had invaded my personal space and had stolen something from it, and then went on stealing from others. It took me a while to become aware that my irritation was a very identitarian claim regarding the writing of history which I would not have made regarding something else: that a certain protest culture, bound to a local language, belongs to those who have both, the same culture and language. Hayes's work made me angry, because of its claim for a broader, maybe even universal culture of protest. I later realized that Hayes stood there in solidarity with the (to her) unknown protagonists of past struggles, like a black man who worked under immiserating conditions in the 1960s. Who is the rightful owner of these and other historical events? Who can claim belonging or having a right to own a particular history?

I came across the non-identitarian relation to other people's histories for the first time in Eastern Europe in the early 2000s. The emergence of Pride and queer festivals made many local groups in Eastern European countries refer to Stonewall, the famous protest for LGBTIQ rights that took place in New York in 1968. It didn't matter that the US context was completely different back then, that there were more than 30 years between then and now. What emerged in these contextualizations of queer history was a transhistorical community. Queerness was something beyond nation, race, class and ability, like in the ACT-Up demonstrations of the early 1990s, when direct action in the middle of the AIDS crisis provoked a wide range of solidarities. Where is the figure of the protester positioned today? Or maybe where would we like it to be if we consider hospitality being the place where protest emerges,

and protest being a major component of social struggles, such as the struggles for the right to move, work, and love?

Instead of a mass demonstration in Hayes's performance, only one person is visible, the performer herself. Hayes's appearance evokes not only associations to demonstrators but also to people we classify as having mental disorders because of particular behaviors that do not fit in the movement of public space. This displacement from social reality is, however, necessary to fully understand Hayes's intervention. Hayes is neither placed within the temporal flow of public space, nor outside of it. She is truly a guest in time, someone who appears and has a story to tell within the temporal framework of past, present, and future. In her actions, she is *beside* the surrounding space, beside the temporal linearity that defines social, economic or political doing in public space, but maybe one can also say beside *herself*.

Being beside oneself is an important figure of thought in philosophy and queer theory. Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about the productivity of being beside something, because "there's nothing very dualistic about it."[19] Judith Butler describes being beside oneself as living in "sexual passion, emotional grief or political rage."[20] The act of a political demonstration happens when we are beside ourselves, and take the risk to expose ourselves with our bodies and voices. This is a moment when particular rights are demanded. But the action "In the Near Future" is only a quote of this demand.[21] It emphasizes what Butler states, that the very legal framework of rights "fails to do justice to passion, and grief and rage, all of which tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, and implicate us in lives that are not our own, sometimes fatally, irreversibly."[22] The person we see in Hayes's action reminds us of situations in which we were involved in passion, grief and politics,

but it insists that potentially everyone could be standing there, being a guest in time, asking to be heard. The encounter of the guest (the protester) and the host (the public) is not a question of property, self-sovereignty or identity. It appears as something we potentially share and have in common. “In the Near Future” reflects back on individuals as past or present protesters by creating proximity between the slogans but also between the cities that host the event. In her article, “New York, Beside Oneself,” Johanna Burton uses the term “ beside” in relation to Sharon Hayes’s work to contextualize the state of being of the city of New York.[23] I would argue that all spaces in which Hayes’s action took place appear to be beside themselves: Vienna, Warsaw, and New York share their potential of loving, grieving and being in political rage – in a queerly familiar way.

Hayes makes claims that often appear to be timeless, universal and exchangeable but not assignable to the present. She interrupts the temporality of usual protest communication, although having invoked it, and leads us to the temporality of her own narrative. The most interesting part regarding the temporality of Hayes’s action happens in front of the installation of “In the Near Future,” when the loneliness of the protesting subject becomes even more evident. We see Hayes protesting alone in several images and in different geographical places. However, in contrast to the live action, we can see all protests, spaces, and slogans *at the same time*. So the timeless demands appear as if they belonged together, as if they shared a common history, but this point of view is only made retrospectively, as it was impossible for individual audiences to see how they could belong together. The images of someone protesting in the past can only be fully recognized now, and not in the moment of their appearance. The fleeting, projected images appear and disappear creating a narration, but without a clear beginning or end. They compose a highly utopian past, which

suggests that we might have had a history of common, universal demands, and they remind us that, sadly, we do not own this history, but are mostly separated through identity, language, and culture. The newly created photographs give us impressions of a non-existing past, without fulfilling the spectator's expectations of seeing a known historical image. These protests have not taken place. The projected images open a time in time that allows us to reflect back on the history of labor struggles and protest culture and our very position within it. In fact, the installation does not allow the viewers to fully identify their personal sense of temporal and historical belonging.

As a viewer of projected images of Hayes's performative event, one is confronted with the inability to recreate historical linearity with one's own belonging in the present. It is not possible to reside in a safe subject position of a stable history and identity. One has to face the questions Hayes is posing: How did we protest in the past? How can I protest alone? How do I relate to universal claims? How do I protest in solidarity with others? In these questions lies an opening, a possibility for something yet to come: narratives to happen in the near future. Only if we acknowledge the narratives of guest workers – but also present-day migrants and refugees – as such fragmented accounts, which fail to appear in a coherent historical image, can we understand the legacy of their particular lives and stories. Each one will bring a gift that needs to be listened to, but altogether they won't produce the stability of identity that right-wing official politics wants to evoke, especially not as a role model for nation-state economic productivity. Rather, the narratives of the former *gastarbeiter_in* already challenge us as a public and will continue to do so again and again in order to answer their question: *how much time do we want to give to the time-in-time they bring in?*

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[1] This exploitation of one historical subjectivity for actual politics was brought up and analyzed by Jana Dolečki in her text "'Home, Foreign Home.'" Dolečki focuses on the connections between older migration movements, like the ones from the 1960s, and more recent ones through the emerging cultural politics of exhibition-making. See Dolečki's article in the previous issue of *transversal*: http://eipcp.net/transversal/1017/dolecki/en (3.4.2018).

[2] See also Ljubomir Bratić, "Rassismus und migrantischer Antirassismus in Österreich," in *Landschaften der Tat: Vermessung, Transformationen und Ambivalenzen des Antirassismus in Europa*, ed. Ljubomir Bratić (Wien: sozaktiv 2002).

[3] Jaques Derrida, *Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jaques Derrida to Respond*, (California: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[4] Ralf Simon, "The Temporality of Hospitality," in *Critical Time in Modern German Literature and Culture,* ed. Dirk Göttsche (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 2016), 165–182.

[5] Ibid., 165.

[6] Unfortunately the English language does not allow for a gendered distinction of the term "guest," therefore, I'm forced to speak of the guest in the only available form.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 169.

[9] Ibid., 173.

[10] Jaques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[11] Simon, *Temporality of Hospitality*, 174.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., 177.

[15] Sharon Hayes, "The Not-Event," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Fall 2011), 45–46.

[16] Julia Bryan-Wilson, "We Have a Future: An Interview with Sharon Hayes," in *Grey Room*, No. 37 (Fall, 2009), 85.

[17] Helena Reckitt, "To Make Time Appear," in *Art Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3 (Fall 2011), 58–63.

[18] Ibid., 181.

[19] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 8.

[20] Judith Butler, "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy," in *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 20.

[21] Patrick Greaney, *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art* (University of Minnesota. Press, 2014).

[22] Butler, *Beside Oneself*, 20.

[23] Johanna Burton, “New York, Beside Itself,” in: *Mixed Use, Manhattan: Photography and Related Practices, 1970s to the Present*, eds. Lynne Cooke, Douglas Crimp and Kristin Poor (Madrid/ Cambridge Mass.: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, MIT Press 2010).