Migrations

David Dibosa

…absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.,)but to the absolute, unknown anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place that I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity … or even their names.

Jacques Derrida[1]

Migration could be described as a process of orientation and reorientation, as bodies 'move away' as well as 'arrive', as they re-inhabit spaces.

Sara Ahmed [2]

Introduction: Arriving with Spectators

J.M.W. Turner's *Steamer in a Snowstorm* (1842), John Everett Millais' *Ophelia* (1852), Jacob Epstein's *Jacob and the Angel* (1941), these are among the treasures of the Tate Collection displayed at Tate Britain, but what do they mean to people who come to Britain from all over the world to work, to study, to live? How much insight do they provide into the condition, the imagination and the predilections of contemporary British culture? For those who find the resources to remain in Britain, questions concerning the usefulness of Britain's cultural institutions arise. How far do they act as points of anchorage or orientation, offering signposts to the significant aspects of the cultures associated with the British Isles? Places like Tate Britain can work for and against attempts to reach such cross-cultural understanding. The Tate Encounters research project aims to explore the ways in which those who form part of migration cultures in Britain navigate the swings and roundabouts of one of the nation's foremost cultural institutions.

The task of the present paper is to foreground the theme of migration by outlining two central concerns: a) how migration developed as an issue of importance within a particular strand of cultural practice in contemporary Britain; b) what initial understandings of the term 'migration' have been reached within the Tate Encounters Research project. Such understandings remain, of course, exploratory and are aimed at providing starting points for the inquiry as a whole.

Visual Cultures of Migration

One of the ways in which the Research Project has addressed the issues raised above is by reformulating them as questions concerning visual cultures of migration. A clearer outline of what is meant by terms like ‘visual cultures’, ‘migration cultures’, and so forth, will appear in the passages that follow. Before setting out the use of such terms, however, it is crucial that the critical and cultural context for their usage in the project should be clarified.

One of the starting points for our inquiry centres on the impact of contemporary and historical migrations to Britain. How do those who form part of migration cultures engage with cultural institutions like Tate Britain? Such questions are asked to elucidate the range of visual practices that emerge out of the experience of migration. What do such practices entail? What part might art objects play in those visual practices? More specifically, how does Tate Britain and the collection of art objects that it displays impact on the visual practices developed in migration cultures?

The institutional setting of Tate Britain is regarded as one particular setting for the art objects on display in its galleries. Such a setting is only one among many contexts within which to have a visual experience of the images in the Tate Collection. Reproduction across a variety of media, including merchandising and print media, sits alongside the internet circulation of many of the more well-known artworks found at Tate Britain. The ability to engage with images in such a broad range of settings remains a feature particular to contemporary conditions. It also implies that images drawn from the Tate Collection will sit alongside other images mediated in a range of contemporary settings, whether they consist of posters on billboards, adverts in magazines, images on websites, television programmes, screensavers on computers and mobile phones as well as other sources within contemporary culture to which those who migrate to Britain have access. It is in relation to this broader field of image production, consumption and circulation that one uses the term, ‘visual cultures’.

It would be disingenuous not to declare from the outset an awareness of the political ramifications that follow from the framing of our research in the terms outlined above. Broad issues of social policy on a national and international scale are often discussed under the rubric of migration – although not always, of course, to much useful effect. Our research is explicitly embedded in the nexus of cultural policy debates that have taken place at a national level since the 1970s. Such debates also have a particular inflection within the institutional context of Tate Britain itself. An awareness of such matters means accepting the complexity of the task we set in undertaking the present research. The way in which our research is situated at a range of political and institutional junctures is not something we overlook. As a result, the questions that we pose become ever more complex and the language in which they are formulated becomes increasingly dense. It is important then that we remain vigilant about the highest goals of our research, around which many of the complex and sometimes competing interests involved in our work can unite.

The point of connection beyond institutional investment and political interest, the aim for which so many resources have been mobilized, remains not the complexities of curatorial policy nor the intricacies of discursive practice, but the series of daily personal exchanges in which human beings are engaged. Those interactions are redolent with opportunities for understanding, compassion and even love, as much as they can be fraught with the dangers of misunderstanding, hostility and fear. Our work, then, is directed towards better understanding those exchanges as they take place in conditions provided in institutional settings that promote contact

with visual art. Better understanding in that setting, then. And, more, an understanding that can help remove the impediments to ever deeper and more wide-reaching explorations of human experience.

The goal of giving ourselves the opportunity to create the conditions for deepening human experience is a lofty one and one that, against the backdrop of change fatigue, policy phobia and institutional anxiety, might well become the object of cynicism or even ridicule. Notwithstanding that, one must recognise the enormous benefits at stake. For, without even managing to bring lofty ideals within view let alone within our reach, there remain chances to attain levels of cross-cultural understanding that would never even have been countenanced had we not started asking these pressing questions about the role of migration.

There is a wealth of material on migration across numerous disciplines, most notably, for our purposes, the following: anthropology (Freidman and Randaria, 2004), including the sub-disciplines of social anthropology (Friedman, 1994) and cultural anthropology (Ewing in Freidman and Randaria, 2004); sociology (Berking, 2006); and economics (de Sousa Santos in Freidman and Randaria, 2004). Other inter-disciplinary fields, such as media studies (Robins and Akay in Freidman and Randaria, 2004) have also made a significant contribution to the field. Needless to say, the vast range of events which constitute the experience of migration demand the attention of a range of skills and expertise. The way in which Migration Studies has lent itself to such inter-disciplinary approaches is reflected in the Tate Encounters Research Project which brings together practices from sociology, anthropology and visual studies, which in itself comprises art history, museology, visual cultures, visual art practice and curatorial practice.

This paper will focus on the visual studies field, placing particular emphasis on critical, theoretical and artistic practices as far as they have impacted on the study of migration. It is a fortunate coincidence that, in the Anglophonic world, at least, some of the key thinkers on contemporary migration, namely Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, have been cited across disciplines (Ewing in Freidman and Randeria, 2004:119; Berking in Friedman and Randeria, 2004: 108). Moreover, it is even more fortunate that both Hall and Gilroy have written, from time to time, on the subject of the visual arts. The following passages, then, will act as an outline review of visual studies literatures and art practices that have been a reference point for reflections on migration in a British cultural context from the 1980s to the present-day. The aim is to point towards some ways in which the knowledge that has circulated in that period has impacted on the initial formulation of questions on migration within the Tate Encounters inquiry.

Terminology: Exploratory definitions

Before accounting for the development of thinking on the theme of migration within the research project, some exploratory definitions for key terms will be outlined. These exploratory definitions have been formulated by the present author in the light of a range of arguments put forward in the literatures under review. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to cite any one particular source as the origin of the exploratory definitions set out. The terms addressed are: a) migrant, b) migrations cultures, c) visualities of migration, d) visual cultures, e) visual cultures of migration.

a) **Migrant**

> '… an individual who moves from one national-territory to another with the aim of setting-up sustainable life-practices within the national territories with which they engage.'[3]

The principal aim of such an exploratory definition is to distinguish the migrant from the tourist. It is not a necessary condition of becoming a tourist that one sets up 'sustainable life-practices' in the territories with which one engages. Indeed, one of the most problematic aspects of tourism is that it supports practices that are unsustainable. For example, the levels of expenditure as a tourist usually exceed those relating to everyday living. The migrant seeks to set up a means of sustaining an everyday life.

The secondary aim of the definition is to distinguish transnational migrations from the regional migrations that take place within nation-states. Tate Encounters focuses on the transnational.

b) **Migration cultures**

'The social bonds, links and affinities created and/or maintained by migrants as a means of supporting their life-practices within the national-territories with which they engage.'[4]

The principal aim of this exploratory definition is to stress the inter-relational or inter-subjective aspects of migrant experience. The emphasis becomes placed thereby on the open social context through which non-migrants become able to develop links with migrants. For example, through links in church groups, business contacts, friendships, work associates, fellow students and so on.

The second aim of the exploratory definition is to avoid unnecessary exclusion of liminal figures – the children of migrants (blood children, adopted, spiritual or sponsored) might themselves not have migrated, whereas they still have a strong affinity with the experience of migration. Similar arguments can, of course, be advanced in relation to sexual partners. The participation of such persons in the development of the social bonds of migrants remains an important consideration. In the present paper, such participation is denoted by the term, 'those who form part of migration cultures', which must be distinguished from less engaged participation such as attending a cultural festival in Trafalgar Square or joining in a parade or some such activity.

The third aim of the exploratory definition is to pluralize the concept, i.e., migration *cultures* not migration *culture*. This serves to ensure that one maintains the sense of difference between one migrating group and another, as well as differences within groups, which cannot be assumed to be coherent or homogenous. Pluralization also helps historicize different migrations. Migrations in the immediate post-war period, for instance, can be distinguished from pre-war or contemporary migrations.

c) **Visualities of migration**

> 'Ways of seeing made possible through processes of migration'.[5]

This exploratory definition is supported by Gillian Rose's distinction between vision and visuality (Rose, 2003: 6).Vision is defined as that which the eye is physiologically able to see, whereas, visuality is that which we, as social beings in particular conditions, are encouraged, allowed and made able to see. A crude example is the distinction between expert and lay visualities. Both might physiologically be able to see the same object but the expert is encouraged to see differential aspects of the object – different qualities, characteristics for example. The lay-person does not receive similar encouragement. The suggestion here, then, is that the experience of migration encourages migrants to see objects in a given visual field in a different way to non-migrants. Such differential ways of seeing are termed 'visualities of migration'.

d) **Visual Cultures**

> 'A way of seeing that emphasizes the inter-relation of objects across a broad range of fields, including television, painting, sculpture, print and digital media, art photography, digital photography, etc. [6]

Visual objects become related not through formal categorizations – form, medium, historical period, author, nation – but through qualities ascribed in subjective moments of seeing. For example, a visual cultural encounter with Tate Britain would not simply involve an engagement with the paintings on the walls but would also include the posters seen along the way, the leaflets circulated, the magazines read, etc. There remains a great deal of scholarship on the subject of visual cultures, on which this definition relies. Such scholarship will be dealt with elsewhere in the Research Project. For the time being, reference to Evans and Hall (1999) and Rogoff (2001) should offer some assistance.

e) **Visual Cultures of Migration**

> 'A way of seeing in which migrants develop a way of engaging with a broad range of visual objects brought together as part of a series of related fields.'[7]

This suggests that the experience of migration can lead to an ability to bring together a range of visual objects that would not otherwise be connected. Such a suggestion relies on the supposition that migrants have access to an increased range of visualities by virtue of the process of migration.

With Miles Behind Us: Reviewing cultural reflections on migration

Years of Resistance: 1980s/early 1990s

Although an overview of reflections on migration could not be other than complex, it can prove useful to offer some initial impressions. At its most simple, one can describe a general shift in thinking away from an emphasis on 'resistance' towards an accentuation of terms stressing self-articulation, self-narration and self-fictionalization.

The late 1970s bore witness to a work that dramatized the struggles of resistance undergone by cultural practitioners who formed part of Britain's migration cultures:

Rasheed Araeen's *How Could One Paint A Self-Portrait!* (1979), depicted an image of the artist over which racist graffiti such as 'blacks out' and 'paki go home' had been deliberately scrawled to obscure Araeen's self-image and thereby thwart his attempts to find a voice. The work remains one of the most poignant elaborations of the struggle to find artistic agency within the antagonistic context of racist Britain. Araeen's work rearticulated the problem of political agency within an arena other than the explicitly political, thereby legitimizing cultural practice as a site of resistance and a place where the struggle to generate another form of agency could take place. Eddie Chambers' work, *The Destruction of the National Front* (1979-80), also posited artistic production as a site of resistance, suggesting that artistic action impacts directly on the political arena.

The artwork of Araeen and Chambers found resonance with theoretical and critical voices, which, by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s had placed the theme of resistance at the top of the critical agenda. Stuart Hall in an essay titled, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' (1990), stressed the importance of generating "resources of resistance and identity" (Hall in Williams and Chrisman, 1993: 394). Paul Gilroy, too, in an essay titled, 'It Ain't Where You're From, It's Where You're At … The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification' (1991), foregrounded the need to analyze resistance, asking "how resistance itself is to be understood." (1991: 3). The political context of Britain during the 1980s, with the culmination of the Reagan-Bush-Thatcher era, must have informed such thinking, particularly as regards attempts by those forming part of migration cultures to find some means of articulating political agency. Such articulations, set against the hyper-nationalist rhetoric of a post-Falklands Britain, had in many ways to be framed in terms of 'resistance'.

For the purposes of Tate Encounters, one can remark on the break with the rubric of 'resistance'. There is no attempt within the project to frame contemporary cultures of migration as cultures struggling to articulate themselves through activities that could be categorized as 'resistant'. Even the positing of political agency as part of the currency of cultural activity within 1980s thinking remains something that is not presumed constitutive of contemporary cultures of migration. That is not to say that the conjunction of political and cultural agency is refused within Tate Encounters. Rather, such a coalescence of the political and the cultural is not assumed to be always and already an implicit goal of cultural activity.

What becomes interesting to note is that even during the late 1980s and early 1990s the emphasis on resistance was giving rise to other strategies. Indeed, one can identify additional strands of thinking that can, in retrospect, be regarded as the antecedents to the current plethora of debates around migration cultures. Hall's essay, for instance, while debating the importance of resistance also elaborated the strategy of 'enunciation', in which artists and thinkers positioned within migration cultures developed ways of engaging with the cultural imaginary in order to produce identities, re-telling the past, re-figuring and to some extent mythologizing as a mean of survival.

Nuanced strategies, like 'enunciation', were associated with a wide range of cultural production such as music and literature, as well as the visual arts. While figures such as Gilroy focussed on the potential of music (Gilroy, 1991) and people such as Jacob Ross (Ross in Owusu, 1988) stressed the importance of literature, the work of contemporary visual artists living in Britain remained a key point of reference to which many thinkers returned. Stuart Hall, for instance, associated his strategy of enunciation with the work of Caribbean British photographer, Armet Francis. Another influential thinker, Sarat Maharaj, also anchored much of his writing on migration cultures within the visual arts field. Maharaj advanced his notion of 'suitcase language' through a discussion of the work of visual artists such as Eddie Chambers, Lubaina Himid, Gavin Jantjes, Keith Piper and Ingrid Pollard. Maharaj saw the

'suitcase' approach as making, "language in which everything is pressed, strapped and squeezed in a suitcase, up to bursting point." (1991: 80)

The positing of visual arts production as means of enacting a range of strategies within migration cultures has informed the development of Tate Encounters. Visual production remains one of the most important, although not the only, means by which participants in the research project are invited to elaborate on their encounters with Tate Britain as well as with images circulating in their everyday lives. Such visual productions on the part of participants might or might not give rise to innovative practices, such as Maharaj's 'suitcase language'. Moreover, the central point rests not on the generation or otherwise of innovative practices but rather on the practice of visual production itself and on the way that it is becomes embedded in other modes of engagement with images encountered by participants in their everyday lives.

International outlooks: A Background to 1980s and early 1990s

Although a significant amount of cultural activity in late twentieth century Britain focussed on ways of interpreting migration cultures within Britain itself, such activity cannot be divorced from the wider context of the thinking that was taking place in North America and the Caribbean as well as across the post-colonial world. For instance, the work of Arjun Appadurai, Tashome Gabriel, Edward Said, Gayatri C. Spivak and many more, set the scene for exchanges that took place within a global context. The awareness of such an international backdrop enriched the engagement with debates that have been taking place in Tate Encounters. Above all, the emphasis on a global context for migration cultures provided us with the awareness that the cultural activity around migration cultures always tends towards a de-centring.

The impact of de-centring can be seen in respect of the Tate Encounters project through the ways in which we recognise the shift away from a tendency to position Tate Britain as a centre of focus towards a tendency to continually generate other centres of activity across the world through which participants in our project travel. The pilot project has, for instance, already brought into focus the terrain of Barbados, Finland, Ireland and Spain, as sites through which existing problematics can be elaborated and, indeed, through which new problematics can be formulated. The framing of the project, then, anticipates that the lived experience of migration cultures – the emails exchanged between friends and family, the journeys back to see former lovers, the phone-calls home – all such matters continually inform our understandings of cultures of migration *as cultures that presume an inter-relatedness between locations*.

Between places: The mid-1990s

Thinking during the mid-1990s brought to the fore an emphasis on movement between places as an important aspect of migration cultures. The engagement with migration shifted from a consideration of the implications of having settled in a territory within which one struggled to find a voice to a consideration of what it meant to exist between places. Homi K. Bhabha's elaboration of the notion of 'hybridity' with its privileging of 'in-between space' (1994: 38) became an important part of that discussion. Bhabha's emphasis on what he termed, "the migrant's double vision" (ibid*.:* 5), stressed the importance of a viewpoint that highlighted, "neither the one nor the other but something else besides." (ibid.: 28). The benefit of such a viewpoint was that it brought to the fore the experience of ambivalence and uncertainty within migration cultures rather than disavowing such features in pursuit of cultural authority

(ibid.: 34). Similar exhortations to locate migration cultures in de-centred spaces could be seen in Gilroy's work from the mid-90s, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993).

In his work, Gilroy encouraged a shift in thinking away from an attempt to resolve the presumed unsituatedness or dislocation of migration cultures towards an understanding of such cultures as always-already in transit between places. Gilroy used the historical model of the Atlantic Triangle, which described the movement of slaves between West Africa, Western Europe and the Americas, as a way of re-inserting the importance of motion at the core of the identity of those forming part of migration cultures. The historical model of the Atlantic Triangle became extrapolated by Gilroy to generate the idea of the 'rhizomorph' – a term underlining the importance of spaces of movement rather than fixed locations.

Although visual arts production among those forming part of migration cultures in Britain in the mid-1990s remained as varied as ever, one can point towards arts practices that resonated with the concerns being raised by critical and theoretical practitioners in that period. The work of Sonia Boyce, for instance, as exemplified through her *Hair* series (1994-6) began to formulate ideas surrounding what can be termed the loosening of identity from its moorings. A photo-work from the *Hair* series, titled *Stuart and Afro* (1996), consisted of a diptych of black-and-white photographs of a young man whose racialized identity is rendered uncertain through his wearing of a large afro wig. The work provoked questions: is it simply an image of a white man wearing an afro or is it an image of a black man or mixed race man who looks like a white man wearing an afro? Such questions, elicited by the work, pointed towards concerns such as the mutability of identity.

The emergence of nuanced takes on issues of identity, such as mutability, among visual arts practitioners took place against a curatorial backdrop that pointed towards a broader geographical perspective among those organising exhibitions and directing cultural policy. The phrase, 'new internationalism', for instance, became a fiercely contested term during the mid-90s. However, exhibitions such as Sunil Gupta's *Disrupted Borders* at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham in 1994, with its emphasis on art practices drawn from across the globe, have been cited as offering a useful inflection on the term (Hylton, 2007: 109). With such new internationalist approaches, the aim seemed to be to focus on a transnational outlook, seeing cultural production as emerging from a series of inter-related discourses emanating from several sources across the world.

Mid-90s cultural production within migration cultures, with its themes of internationalism, mutability and translocation, can be seen to have impacted on debates informing Tate Encounters. Our presumptions that participation in migration cultures implies an acceptance of inter-relatedness between locations can be taken farther. Such inter-relatedness need not be problematized in and of itself. There need be no expectation that any of our research participants should be seeking resolution to any possible ambivalence or uncertainty associated with an acceptance of inter-relatedness between locations. For instance, the experience of being a West Asian woman living and working in East London has not, as such, been framed as generating a set of problems central to our research. Rather the problem is situated at the level of the encounters of the West Asian woman *within* the institutional context of Tate Britain. On the one hand, then, those forming part of migration cultures can be characterised by mutability and translocation, on the other an institution continually rearticulating its situatedness within a particular historic domain. The ways in which those forming part of migration cultures navigate such an encounter remains one of the central lines of investigation in the project.

Fashioning the Self: The late 1990s

As one might expect, the debates around mutability and translocation sourced within the mid-1990s continued to inform critical and artistic production in the late 1990s. Artworks, such as Yinka Shonibare's celebrated C-type photo-series, *Diary of a Victorian Dandy* (1998), depicted the artist enacting a series of performative gestures connoting Victorian gentlemanly leisure pursuits – a game of billiards, a musical soirée, rehearsing a speech, a scene of debauchery. The work was taken up in texts by influential critics, such as Okwui Enwezor (later artistic director of Documenta XI), who commented on migration, specifically in respect of the work of African artists living and working in Western metropolises. For Enwezor, the ground of migrant experience in the Western metropolis remained marked by indeterminacy, to which migrant artists responded with strategies of 'self-narration', 'self-fashioning' and 'self-production' (Enwezor in Oguibe and Enwezor, 1999: 273).

Standpoints, such as those placing emphasis on the highly self-conscious strategies of self-narration against a backdrop of indeterminacy, have helped develop at least one strand of thinking within Tate Encounters. One must accept that those individuals who form part of contemporary migration cultures have available to them strategies of self-fashioning and self-narration that can be articulated in highly self-conscious ways. Such articulations need not be problematized but should rather be understood as a means of negotiating experience.

A view from several sides: the turn of the twenty-first century

In 2002, the visual studies field brought together artists, critics, curators and theorists working around issues of migration via the international art event Documenta XI. It would be impossible here to summarise the myriad ways in which Documenta XI re-shaped and reconsolidated thinking on migration issues across a range of cultural practices taking place in Britain at the turn of the new millennium. It could prove useful, though, to point towards one of the Documenta's themes that has contributed to debates taking place in the intellectual milieu within which Tate Encounters is situated.

The notion of 'creolization' was elaborated by the Artistic Director of Documenta XI, Okwui Enwezor (Enwezor in Ander et al, 2002). His rendition of it emphasized a polycentric or multi-centred model of contemporary experience in many parts of the world. Such polycentrism embraced the idea that those forming part of migration cultures carried with them a multi-centred world-view. According to 'creolization', individuals built such world-views knowing that they could only inhabit particular places in full consciousness of other centres in the world. Creolization, then, put forward a model of migration in which the migrant carried with her/himself an awareness of a multi-centred, inter-dependent world.

The idea of creolization was embedded in the structure of Documenta XI in the form of one of the themes the event's five 'platforms' or main features. It thereby benefited from rapid international dissemination. Visual artists, such as the film-maker Isaac Julien, discussed the importance of creolization within works, such as his film *Paradise Omeros* (2002). The key point to make is that although 'creolization' was specifically formulated in respect of experiences of the Caribbean, it has been taken as a model for analyzing the experience of those forming part of migration cultures across the world. As Enwezor put it:

In recent years, though waves of migration and displacements Creolization has emerged as a dominant modality of contemporary living practices, shaping patterns of dwelling that are crossed and differentiated by massive flows of images and cultural symbols expressed through material culture and language. (2002: 51)

It is with reference to the flows of images and cultural symbols across a multi-centred world that creolization gains an importance for the work of Tate Encounters. The acceptance of models of migration cultures that underline an inter-relatedness between the national territories with which migrants engage has become crucial for the development of our inquiry. Through creolization, such inter-relatedness can be recognised as giving rise to a polycentricity or multi-centred view that posits the migrant as one who is aware of the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of the centres with which they engage. Such a re-conceptualisation of migration has already proved useful in analyses rehearsed as part of our pilot project. Certain project participants have already begun to develop strategies that respond to Tate Britain alongside cultural institutions in other European centres. This might seem like a small observation to make but it does demonstrate the way in which migrants develop a polycentric rubric that gets applied trans-nationally.

Coming up to date: recent developments

The middle years of the first decade of the new millennium have witnessed little slowdown in the engagement with issues relating to migration cultures within the field of visual studies. In many ways, of course, we benefit from the inter-disciplinary nature of the field and its tendency to let its boundaries slip to admit useful scholarship from adjacent fields. Perhaps, one could say that the field itself has become intellectually creolized (at least we practise what we preach). In that respect Paul Gilroy's recent comments on media culture and Sara Ahmed's deployment of phenomenology within the field of cultural studies have provided beneficial input to studies of migration cultures.

Gilroy's observations came in his analysis of contemporary Britain, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (2004), in which his advancement of the notion of 'conviviality' involved what can be seen as an insightful contribution to the field of film and television studies. Gilroy's commentary on the popular culture figure Ali G, in particular, reiterated the importance of 'cultural mutability' (2004: 148). In addition, Gilroy's discussion of a television show, *The Office,* highlighted the point that migration cultures impact differentially between London and other urban centres within contemporary Britain.

The understanding that Gilroy has reached impacts usefully on the research within Tate Encounters in so far as it sets out limits. Tate Britain is a national cultural institution located in London. Our research participants are drawn from migration cultures in London. The deliberations of our research can be seen, then, to have direct implications for national cultural institutions in London, particularly museums and galleries such as: the National Gallery, the V&A, the National Maritime Museum, and others. In the light of Gilroy's arguments, the impact of our research in respect of national cultural institutions and migration cultures situated in urban centres outside London would have to be regarded as circumspect.

Another recent contribution to the study of migration cultures comes from the cultural studies field in the form of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: orientations, objects, others* (2006). Although Ahmed's study does not, in the main, take her phenomenological analysis deep into areas central to the concern of visual studies,

she does make observations that can be regarded as relevant to aspects of the study of decorative arts and interior design. Discussing the use of objects in spaces taken up by those forming part of migration cultures, particularly in respect of the making of homes, Ahmed emphasizes the importance of 're-making' (2006: 150). She argues: "The proximity of objects is not a sign of nostalgia, of being sick for a home that is lost. Rather…objects make new identities possible." (ibid.) Such arguments can be seen as an inflection on the notion of self-narration.

Ahmed's emphasis on bodies moving through three-dimensional space underlines the importance of understanding that visual objects do not circulate in culture in a flat, neutral space but rather remain physically located and affected by the bodies that mediate their transaction. As Ahmed suggests, emphasis can be placed on, "…the comings and goings of different bodies as they remake homes in what at first might feel like rather strange worlds." (ibid) Such understanding brings us back to the space of the gallery and to our focus on the production of visual cultures of migration within the context of Tate Britain.

Points of Departure

It seems somewhat off-key to write about conclusions, as such, in a paper that is directed towards setting out our points of departure. One can gesture, however, towards the way in which visual arts practices together with the theoretical debates that have engaged with such practices can and, indeed, have provided a strong framework within which to articulate the questions currently emerging from our research. The framework within which such questions get formulated must, in our view, be explored as one that has been shaped in the light of thinking derived from a range of sources over a period stretching back to the late 1980s. By reflecting on the way in which our inquiry remains located within a particular history of investigation of migration becomes a step towards positioning the starting point of the research project in other ways – ethically, methodologically, theoretically.

By being explicit about the genealogy informing our initial framework, the aim is not to force the inquiry down particular lines of investigation nor, moreover, to direct our thinking towards particular ends. We must admit that, like many contemporary researchers, we do anticipate particular audiences for our research outputs; we hope that particular persons and groups will be interested in our methods and attracted by our approach. However, in the spirit of the best research practice, we remain constantly open to surprise. Our pilot project has already thrown up some surprises and, has helped us reformulate some of the arguments with which we started. So the opening of this inquiry can be seen more as a re-opening, a further addition to the scholarship that has been looking at the issues of migration and identity for some time and to which we hope our research will make a valuable contribution.

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