

Hommes & migrations

Half a century

of immigration to France

In 1950, Jacques Ghys (1914-1991) founded *Les Cahiers nord-africains*, the first press review devoted to reflecting on and intervening in Maghreb immigration in France, published by the Amana association. In 1965, the Cahiers took note of the diversification of migratory flows in France and became *Hommes & Migrations*. This journal, pioneering and unique in its kind, began publishing in-depth reports and authoritative, thought-provoking articles on the most various subjects, deliberately presenting a mixture of views, and allowing practitioners, academic specialists and policy makers to present their cases.

From 1999 to 2004, *H&M* was published by the Agency for the Development of Intercultural Relations (Adri). From January 1, 2005, it was published by the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (CNHI). As the oldest journal to deal with the phenomena of human mobility, it approaches the new century with the same desire as in the past to understand, explain and frame these questions. The death of Philippe Dewitte, its editor-in-chief, in May 2005, deprived the team of the journal's intellectual pilot, a man who, for more than ten years, had made *Hommes & Migrations* a true journal with its own special place in the field of journals in France.

It is this heritage that *Hommes & Migrations* seeks to preserve and develop within the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, which became a public establishment on 1 January 2007, by helping to promote and disseminate the best cutting-edge work on migration issues.

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Standing for freedom

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Saying, seeing, bearing witness

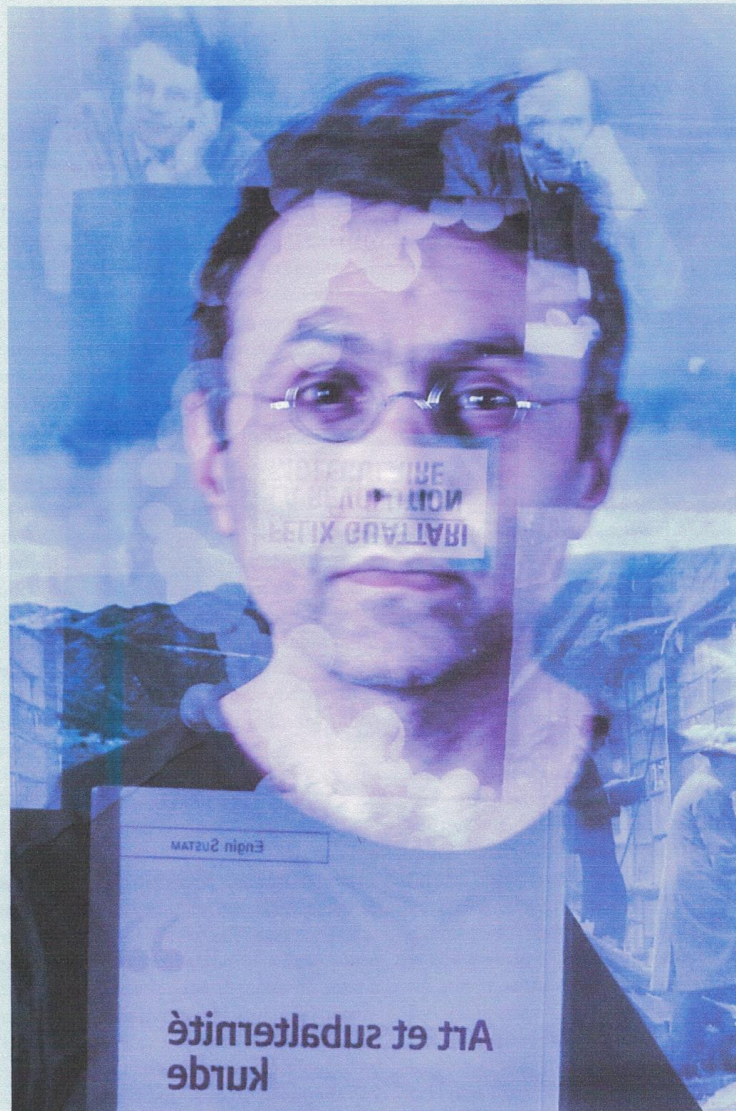
Decolonizing exile with a photographic image in times of insecurity

How can I translate exile, what subjective view can I bring to this image, as an intellectual in exile belonging to a society that has no state (*Bê Welat*)? My first experience of exile followed my signing of the Academics for Peace (BAK) petition which led to my immediate dismissal in 2015. This manifesto brought together academics in opposition who demanded the truth ('We will not be complicit in this crime') and calling for the cessation of hostilities inflicted by the Turkish government on the Kurds. The petition also contested the rallying of academic institutions to a 'racial accord on Turkishness'.¹ It was supported by international funds for researchers in danger (IIE-SRF, PAUSE, CARA, etc.). It reaffirmed the absolute necessity for international solidarity and vigilance to unconditionally support intellectuals in danger, in Turkey but also in Iran, as in the case of the Franco-Iranian anthropologist Fariba Adelkhah.

In this text, I wish to show how a photographic image makes it possible to grasp the memorial issues of Kurdish space faced with an exile of nearly a century². The Kurds explore exile as the space for their emancipation, as the site of resistance and struggle, giving them back visibility and legitimacy. This diasporic place recounts the memory of a stateless society that gives meaning to exile. In this context, my exile is not a place of confinement for the cursed identities that I carry within me, but a place for my own existence that expresses my decolonial position.

POLITICAL MEMORY AND IMAGINARY RESISTANCE

Contrary to a nostalgic conception, it may be interesting to rethink exile as the place of the creation of a 'de-exile'³. Didi-Huberman discusses the politics of the image as a visual tool in his book *The Surviving Image*⁴, where he analyzes images inspired by Walter Benjamin's critique of memory in the days of fascism in Europe. It constitutes a sensitive singularity of the politics of time. The image of an exiled researcher also expresses his new micro-identity and his new intellectual posture. The image is thus treated in a commemorative manner, both from an artistic and political point of view as well as through the scientific gaze. The image of the exiled person becomes a trace and substitutes the presence of the thing instead of its absence. The objects that exiles choose draw a constellation⁵ reflecting the collective and singular tones of their existence. In these images circulates the desire for the lost world that academic exiles reaffirm as a time regained so that their politico-intellectual reflection can be re-appropriated in the present. Through the gaze, one can freely rewrite one's own unique experience. We have become the actors of exile in spite of ourselves, out of political obligation, we are like this transfigured into subjects of exile. My exile is also linked to the experience of Kurdish exile. Kurdish emancipation and cultural production has its renaissance in the path of exile with the storytellers who constitute the memory of a



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Saying, seeing, bearing witness

stateless people and 'Bê Welat' (without a homeland) practice. And so, while I was having my portrait taken with the photographer Pierre-Jérôme Adjedj as part of the RESTRICA project hosted by the University of Paris Lumières organized by Pascale Laborier, my face was captured amid the fragmented pieces of my life: my village, the mountains, the sky, my book, a book by Félix Guattari, the image of a conference by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari at the University of Paris 8, two characters in hats, reading, while I gaze at them with my sad, peaceful eyes, emphasized by my glasses.

Being an intellectual in exile gives one a particular sensitivity to precariousness, insecurity, territorial dispossession, political conflict, mutilated memory and the representation of a micro-identity. This image consecrates me as a de-exile by integrating political memory outside a place that was mine, inside a place that is no longer mine. It opens up the space for reconciliation between the political memory of the place of exile and resistance, in an imaginary place that restores it.

ACADEMIC EXILES LIVING IN INSECURITY

Exile defines us in two ways. While maintaining the feeling of being different, the exiled person occupies this 'reserved and free' place so as to restructure political movements and mobilizations. But the legitimization of a free place constitutes a risk because it locks us into a melancholy attitude marked by a painful dependence on solidarity. For, in the long term, insecurity is the striking reality experienced by exiles; it weakens them beyond the solidarity specific to emergencies in an academic landscape marked by austerity. The competitiveness that then develops increases the vulnerability of

exiled researchers. Exiled academics become active in scholarly study, but they also constitute a workforce at the mercy of precarious fixed-term employment contracts, as Asli Vatansever underlines in her book *At the Margins of Academia*⁶.

Academic exiles feel more than others that they have an uncertain future. They suffer from nostalgia and feel out of the world, in-between people, confronting cultures, their own and that of the host country⁷. Adorno writes from his exile in the United States: 'exile is a damaged life'⁸. In *Representations of the Intellectual*⁹ Edward W. Said writes that, as a result of uprooting, a new type of intellectual appears, suffering from alienation and from 'self-exile' as a homeless person. Our looks testify to this in the photos: ironic, sceptical, distraught and Dionysian, sometimes even mischievous but not cynical, foreigners even within our own community and our academic culture.

FROM AN EXILE OF ENCLOSURE TO THE DECOLONIZED IMAGE OF DE-EXILE

Being an exile implies, beyond heartbreak and suffering, the recreation of a cognitive self and the manifestation of this new self in a dispersed space marked by insecurity and an uncertain future. Intellectuals describe, in their depressive accounts, the situation of their traumatized experience. What betrays the depth of the gaze is the feeling of being expatriated from one's territory and the intellectual melancholy aroused by 'the impossibility of writing otherwise'¹⁰ in a language that does not belong to us.

In general, an image that memorializes the motley tale of a life unveils a series of lived stories. It reveals researchers through their productions, their feelings and their past, and inscribes them in their decolonial singularity, decontextualizing

the discourse of exile. Exile deterritorializes authors at the same time as it reterritorializes them within academia. What characterizes the mental condition of exiles in an insecure university context is the feeling of the irreversibility of their situation as well as the impossibility of returning to their environment. This necessarily critical attitude vis-à-vis the discourse of the institution is something exiled scholars share with insecure scholars, reinventing their own language on the basis of their subjectivity, which is mistreated in their places of work. The decolonized gaze of exile is a mode of expression that also illustrates a fragmented political position from which a new episteme emerges. The traces of blur in the image illustrate the way in which the anguish of the exile was worked on by the artist, transposed into his gaze, in a political gesture. Our writings and performances on exile are part of a post-traumatic discourse that illustrates the dramatic change shown in the image. The images chosen by the exiled scholar emphasize the complex relationship between the portrait and the challenges of the insecure reality that the exile experiences (rather than emphasizing any effects relating to scholarship). The project shows these images to the public.

As Walter Benjamin noted in his discussion of the productivity of images: 'An image, on the contrary, is when the Old meets the Now in a flash to form a constellation.'¹¹ The shape of the image expresses a blend of distraught gazes and lost gazes. The lens captures the change in an intellectual's life and fixes the fear of uncertainty and the complexity of being, after breaking with the epistemic innocence of his or her past. This layering without effects contributes to the dramatic power of the image. It means we can perceive the many delicate levels of a wandering subjectivity and acts as a decolonial analysis of the

shock of exile which has separated researchers from their past by projecting them into a stateless society.

The photographic image restores historical memory by turning it into material for a visual archive, in the background. I am thinking of those European intellectuals, scientists, scholars and artists exiled during the Second World War, people such as Albert Einstein, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, André Breton, Marcel Duchamp, Claude Lévi-Strauss, etc. They shed light on my own situation in exile through their intellectual and artistic experience. ■

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2. Hamit Bozarslan, *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient. De la fin de l'Empire ottoman à Al-Qaida*, Paris, La découverte, 2008.
3. Engin Sustam, 'La mémoire d'un intellectuel exilé: dire la vérité face à la souveraineté néropolitique et être chercheur en exil', in Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, Valeria Wagner, Marion Brepohl, Graziela de Coulon, Ilaria Possenti, and Teresa Veloso Bernedo (eds), *Vers le desexil. Démarches, questions, savoirs*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019, pp. 89-113.
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6. Asli Vatanever, *At the Margins of Academia: Exile, Precariousness, and Subjectivity*, Leiden, Brill, 2020.
7. Enzo Traverso, *La pensée dispersée. Figures de l'exil juif*, Paris, Lignes, 2004, pp. 10-12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 9. See also Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, translated by Dennis Redmond, available online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1951/mm/index.htm>.
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10. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan, Minnesota UP, 1986.
11. Walter Benjamin, *Paris, capital of the nineteenth century in Selected Writings*, 3: 1935-38, Translated by Edmund Jephcott and al., Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006.