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1 For instance, Zygmunt Bauman generically postulates that modernity has seen a transition from solid to liquid times and that institutions, behaviour and most other things ‘can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long’. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Polity, Cambridge, 2007, p 1.

2 Their postulations on rhizomatic culture are founded upon six principles: 1 The principle of connection: any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other; 2 The principle of heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other; 3 The principle of multiplicity; 4 The principle of a signifying rupture: a rhizome may be broken, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines; 5 The principle of cartography; and 6 The principle of decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model; it is a map and not a tracing. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi, trans, Athlone Press, London, 1987, pp 7–12.

3 Ibid. Transitive individuals in the global context are compared to bulbous plants that have adjusted to desert

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, terms such as ‘globalisation’ and ‘global art’ have increasingly been used to describe the condition of contemporary art. The mobility and transitivity of artistic (and curatorial) practices have been evident across a range of translocal sites, mediators, circuits and means, including global platforms such as biennales, travelling exhibitions and online exhibition and distribution; this has led to an increase in art practices’ visibility and circulation. Theorists have argued that the disruptive, discontinuous spaces of transnational globalisation affect many of the key structures and relationships in the arts, such as the relationship of artwork to audience, the semiotic reception of the work, the art object in relation to its space of exhibition, and markets.¹

Aspects of mobility and changeability marking a global human condition and culture formation since the 1990s have been notably surveyed through the lens of nomadism, and Deleuze and Guattari’s postulations on rhizomatic culture have played a major part in such theorisations. Nomadic activity has increased dramatically over the past three decades to become a generic cultural condition, not only physically, in terms of people travelling more easily, regularly and further in distance, but also as a technological and a psycho-social condition. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce rhizomatic thought as related to forms of transcultural patterning grounded in survival, multiplication and dislocation,² and argue that the ‘rhizome itself assumes many diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion in bulbs and tubers’.³ Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic model is oppositional to a tree-like, arborescent model of knowledge that works with dualism, binarism and vertical and linear connections, and instead favours planar and transcultural patterning. The cultural theorist, Rosi Braidotti maintains that the nomadic predicament and its multiple contradictions have come of age in the third millennium after years of debate on the “nonunitary” – split, in process,

and other harsh environmental conditions by changing their leaves to become thorns and the surface to protect the plant against a loss of water.

knotted, rhizomatic, transitional, nomadic – so that fragmentation, complexity and multiplicity have become everyday terms in critical theory’.⁴

Resisting chronology and organisation, the planar movement of the rhizome follows a nomadic system of growth and propagation, which is likened in this article to the arbitrary floating pattern of a symbolic Ship of Fools; the cartographic, displacing movement of the migrant boats of the refugee asylum seekers; and the random exhibition of Florentijn Hofman’s *Rubber Duck* in various locations. The trope of the boat as a floating vehicle or container takes centre stage in this precarious, discursive constellation. Comprehending the representation of a means of transport in between places, liminality and nomadic movement, the figure of the boat connects with both rhizomatic thinking and Foucauldian heterotopic thought. At the same time, as a transportation mechanism the boat is interwoven with the teleology of human carriage and the self-inscribed and self-inflicted autobiography of a proposed ‘good ending’, as well as with memory. However, I immediately acknowledge that the intention and execution behind the populist patois of Hofman’s yellow *Rubber Duck* differs immensely from the suffering and violence hinted at in Paul McCarthy’s *Ship Adrift*, *Ship of Fools*, as well as from the tragic predicament of the migrant refugees. My intention, though, is to interpret differing boat iconography within the nomadic context as figuratively demonstrative of autobiography, as intertwined with an unpleasant present, memory, and characterised by potent utopian underpinnings of good-ending ideology. From this angle I contentiously connect the highly traumatic parergon framing the migrant boat to the superslick yellow *Rubber Duck* and the culturo-political grunge of the *Ship Adrift*, *Ship of Fools*.

In order to deal with this critical discursive dilemma, Russell West-Pavlov’s inventive term of ‘polyculturalism’ is appropriated, which in his thinking relates to contemporary migration dilemmas, cultural diversity and national identity characterising debates on the dismantling of borders and multiple cultural affiliations.⁵ In the light of the very real tragedy of rubber dinghies filled with desperate refugees risking their lives in the search of a better life, *Rubber Duck* as an artwork seems distinctly ‘privileged’ and even flippant. Yet, such is the very fabric of West-Pavlov’s notion of polycentrism, in which the ideological agency of autobiographical narrative allows for a tendentious range in the inclusivity of individual choice. West-Pavlov’s notion of polyculturalism embodies a more radicalised notion of postmodern multiculturalism, since it is concerned with the

mobility of cultural identity, the tendency of cultural subjects to shift across borders, the inevitability with which culture is perennially being formed at the interstices of geographical and linguistic spaces.⁶

Moreover, such polycultural discourses are grounded in people’s everyday lives, and West-Pavlov admits to them occurring wherever ‘a myriad of new histories have been released in the public domain’, such as in the South-African post-Apartheid context.⁷

Polyculturalism is marked by plurality and its politicisation; it reflects a condition where Bhabhian ‘non-consensual affiliation’ would resist the erasure of discursive difference on the grounds of personal trauma,⁸ for

4 Rosi Braidotti, ‘A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-Postmodernism’, *Australian Feminist Studies*, vol 20, no 47, 2005, p 3

5 Russell West-Pavlov, ‘Discourses of Uprooting, Discourses of Re-Routing, Autobiographical Discourse and Cultural Nomadism, in Foucault, Castro and Flusser’, in Anja Schwarz and Russell West-Pavlov, eds, *Polyculturalism and Discourse*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2007, pp ix, p 125. West-Pavlov is Professor and Chair of English at the University of Tübingen.

6 *Ibid*, p xi, p137

7 *Ibid*

8 Homi K Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p 12

instance, or the stubborn uncompromising engagement between diverse ethnic groups. As such, polycultural discourses are unavoidably interconnected with autobiography – notoriously difficult to define but understood as selfhood narrative by West-Pavlov – in that the multiplicitous account cannot unfold without individual participation.⁹ Autobiography is concerned with a recounting of self and its personal development within a given context; yet, it is also unavoidably inventive. Such self-inscription is not a neutral process, but part and parcel of the struggles for power, and constitutes the very fabric of conditions for existence. Thus, autobiography is understood here as a narrative or documenting mode of the manifestations of the self, hence constructing an identity that includes the subjective ideologies and power relationships the self creates and encounters, including the relation between memory and agency. Autobiography is furthermore considered as constituting the ideological agency of the subject, *whatever form that might take in the polycultural context and wherever subjective choice leads*. West-Pavlov’s understanding of ideology in the polycultural context allows not only for the inclusion of individuals’ representation of the conditions of their own existence to themselves, but also for the constitution of the subject (the self) in its subjectivity,

making a subject out of the raw material of an individual. Such a form of ideology allows for radically differing subjectivities and self-inscription in the fluidity of the nomadic context of global culture. Producing the subject through the agency of a highly tendentious set of narratives.¹⁰

West-Pavlov postulates that autobiographical discourse continues to manifest as one of the most potent forms of ideology;¹¹ in addition, it is argued that subjective nomadic ideology more often than not manifests as a wish for a utopian good ending.

RUBBER DUCK’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Intended as an art object that would unite people and create happy feelings, Hofman’s surreal *Rubber Duck* (2007–2016), evokes innocuous childhood memories of home and belonging through the idea of a child playing with a yellow rubber duck in a bathtub. The deceptively simple and playful work’s autobiography is inscribed in its presentation as pseudo-boat, monumental toy, memory object and public artwork. Being presented in over-sized format as a ‘boat’ together with the other ‘real’ boats and ships, *Rubber Duck* deliberately manifests an impotent ontology by not being a fully operational boat and missing its purpose of transporting human beings or goods from one destination to the next. The work’s idiosyncrasy is constructed through its very ideology of being an imaginative oddity, an Other, in the context of serious production, transport systems and international business, but it persists in sharing the characteristics of ‘boat’, transportation and global transitivity with the real ships and boats. Although Hofman’s *Rubber Duck* is mostly re-manufactured for every showing, the impression is gained that it is the same work ‘travelling’ from site to site, since its outward appearance remains

⁹ West-Pavlov, ‘Discourses of Uprooting’, op cit, p xv

¹⁰ Ibid, p 125

¹¹ Ibid



Florentijn Hofman, *Rubber Duck*, Hong Kong, 2013, Inflatable structure on metal pontoon, anchored to concrete blocks in the water, 15000×18000 mm, photo: courtesy Florentijn Hofman

- 12 Kim Engbers, Hofman's studio manager, in an email interview with Elfriede Dreyer, 28 January 2016
- 13 Ibid
- 14 As an example of the work's extensive global exhibition, in 2016 *Rubber Duck* toured China as follows: Hangzhou, Xixi Wetland National Park, 3 June – 15 July; Qingdao, International Sailing Center, 30 June – 30 July; Guiyang, Future Ark, Nanming River, 4 July – 7 September; Nanjing, Mochou Lake Park, 18 October – 17 November; Shanghai, Century Park, 23 October – 23 November; and Macao, Science Center, 29 April – 27 May. Previous showings of the work were: 2013, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, size 18 × 18 × 21 metres; 2013, Taoyuan, Taiwan, size 18 × 18 × 21 metres; 2013, Beijing, China, 18 × 18 × 21 metres; 2013, Pittsburg, USA, size 12 × 14 × 16 metres; 2013, Baku, Azerbaijan, size 12 × 14 × 16 metres; 2013, Hong Kong, China, size 14 × 15 × 16.5 metres; 2013, Sydney, Australia, size 13 × 14 × 15 metres; 2012, Onomichi, Japan, size 10 × 11 × 13 metres; 2011, Auckland, New Zealand, size 12 × 14 × 16 metres; 2009, Hasselt, Belgium, size 12 × 14 × 16 metres; 2009, Osaka, Japan, size 10 × 11 × 13 metres; 2008, Sao Paulo, Brazil, size 12 × 14 × 16 metres; 2007, Saint-Nazaire, France, size 26 × 20 × 32 metres. 'Rubber duck tour China', http://rubberduckinchina.com/about_en/, accessed 7 April 2016.
- 15 CityLab, 'The Rubber Duck Artist Must Be Stopped', 2014, <http://www.citylab.com/design/2014/09/the-rubber-duck-artist-must-be-stopped/379577/>, accessed 19 February 2016
- 16 'Iconic Giant Rubber Duck Meets Fowl Play', 2015, World Travel, news.com.au,
- more or less the same, with some size differences. In most incidences of its exhibition, the work was produced in a size equal to large leisure boats or medium-sized freighters. In an unkind time fraught with anxiety over terrorist attacks, environmental concerns, digital invasion and other threats, Hofman's intention with the monumental yellow *Rubber Duck* seems to have been to forcefully induce cheerfulness and make the dystopian gloom disappear, if only for a short while. Hofman's studio manager, Kim Engbers,¹² indicates that *Rubber Duck* was primarily meant to be a global work, conceived with the ideological intention to connect people: 'In 2000 Florentijn bought a world map and stuck [sic] many small ducks on that same map and then... waited for the first to be commissioned.' The work was therefore perceived to act as a catalyst in the global context, since it 'brings people together, changes reality and public domain and economics... the work connects all those places it went to...'¹³ In 2016, the work toured China, and in 2017 it was on display in the harbour of Macao until 27 May.¹⁴
- Through *Rubber Duck*'s exhibition in different locales and to dissimilar audiences, the diversity in country, place and site brings about volatile, nuanced understandings and varying reception of the work. Although entertaining and 'innocent' in character, *Rubber Duck* has become quite controversial for various unfortunate reasons. The work was criticised inter alia for communicating 'infantilising' messages;¹⁵ there was outrage about its price and for bringing a 'circus' to town in Pittsburg;¹⁶ in 2009, *Rubber Duck* was stabbed forty-two times in Belgium by annoyed locals, triggering a Giant Duck Night Watch;¹⁷ and copyright issues surrounded the work in the selling of souvenirs of the yellow duckling in Keelung, Taiwan, at the time of its exhibition (2013–2014). Presenting more problems in Philadelphia, the intellectual property attorney, Jordan LaVine of Flaster Greenberg argued:¹⁸
- The touchstone question here is, does his work have enough originality that copyright would attach to it. A rubber duck is an extremely common thing, and making a very large one does not necessarily give someone copyright rights in that artistic expression. This just looks like a standard rubber ducky.¹⁹
- Nevertheless, its ambivalent identity of being both celeb and pariah did not hinder the immense popularity of *Rubber Duck* and to date it has turned into one of the most recognisable public artworks.
- In the space of dispersal in the interstices of geographical dislocation of the identity-in-mobility of *Rubber Duck* which reveals disparate responses to the work, a shift from analytical to subjective modes of reception and articulation occurs, as theorised by West-Pavlov:²⁰ the ambivalent identity of *Rubber Duck* confirms what he describes as the 'strangeness' at the heart of the 'familiarity of autobiographical constructions of selfhood – a "strangeness" which becomes explicit in transcultural biographies'.²¹ Becoming 'strange', Other and different in the polycultural environment, the giant yellow toy duck challenges stereotypes of, for instance, what an artwork 'should' be or look like; of where art should be exhibited; and of comprehending art's purposes.

- 31 July 2015, <http://www.news.com.au/travel/world-travel/iconic-giant-rubber-duck-meets-fowl-play-and-stabbed-42-times/news-story/794f682788ba87ac0bb16d05f40c0207>, accessed 25 January 2016
- 17 CityLab, 'The Rubber Duck Artist Must Be Stopped', op cit
- 18 'Dutch Rubber Duck Artist Cries Foul over Giant Philly Rubber Duck', News + Opinion, Philadelphia, 2 June 2015, <http://www.phillymag.com/news/2015/06/02/philadelphia-rubber-duck-dutch-artist/>, accessed 8 January 2016
- 19 The yellow toy duck was patented in 1949 by sculptor Peter Ganine after which more than 50 million were sold all over the world. 'Design Foe [Sic] A Toy Duck', US D 153514 S, 1949
- 20 West-Pavlov, 'Discourses of Uprooting', op cit, p 137
- 21 Ibid, p 122
- 22 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op cit, p 94
- 23 Ibid
- 24 Braidotti, 'A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-Postmodernism', op cit, p 3
- 25 Ibid
- 26 West-Pavlov, 'Discourses of Uprooting', op cit, p 125
- 27 Bhabha, *The Location Of Culture*, op cit, p 277
- 28 Ibid, p 56
- 29 Ibid

For Homi K Bhabha, the stereotype always functions in excess of the empirically proven or logically construed, where the strategies of discriminatory power and categorisation come to be chartered.²² Bhabha furthermore argues the concept of fixity as an ideological construction of Otherness.²³ Rosi Braidotti views the 'intersecting lines' of Otherness as the 'inter-connected facets of structural otherness defined on a hierarchical scale of pejorative differences'.²⁴ To her, the 'historical era of globalisation is the meeting ground on which sameness and otherness or centre and periphery confront each other and redefine their inter-relation'.²⁵

Categorisations of Sameness and Otherness unfold in *Rubber Duck* as a globally travelling work: on one hand the work manifests as an Other, but on the other hand the work is ultra-recognisable and ambivalently enjoys instant recognition through acquaintance on a global, collective scale. Operating in a nomadic context, *Rubber Duck* demonstrates how the identities of the subjects become constructed through the ideologies of Others, since, as West-Pavlov argues,²⁶ such autobiographical discourses are one of the places where 'late modern subjects are most at the mercy of strategies of manipulation and coercion'. Constructs of Otherness are set up through the Otherness of the socio-cultural and political contexts encountered, whereby the work's intended meaning constructs undergo change. Manifold parerga of meaning frame *Rubber Duck*, propelling its autobiography into hybridity and variability, as mutable as its inflatable self. Subaltern agency emerges here through re-location, and re-inscription and hybridity manifest as a contesting agency, functioning in the space *inbetween* the rules of engagement.²⁷ Following Bhabha, it can be argued that *Rubber Duck* operates in 'split-space' or a Third Space in the polycultural, global arena, based 'not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity'.²⁸ Whereas as art object *Rubber Duck* becomes an Other through difference in the industrial harbour context and thereby assumes an identity of instability, visually it remains cohesive and stable in its exhibition in very different international contexts. Its eccentric identity becomes ruptured, although materially it has (more or less) remained the same object. It would seem, then, that through difference, identity as a homogeneous and integrated entity becomes contested in the global arena, since the idea of fixity comes into dispute and turns into a volatile, unpredictable and hybrid state.

Returning to the issue of the ambivalent and subjective responses of the different audiences to *Rubber Duck*, it could be argued that such criticism is principally located in the work's political expediency of ambivalence, which seems to have been mostly reserved for difference as entertainment value – much of what the Saartjie Baartman biography in the colonial context revealed. In colonial constructs, Others not belonging to the major or dominant culture have always fascinated and entertained the major culture (that is, until they have become redundant and unwanted). It is however not in the black/white space of schism but, as theorised by Bhabha's Third Space – an inbetween space that exists on the cutting edge of translation and negotiation – that the politics of polarity becomes confounded.²⁹ The Third Space is the meeting point of difference, where autobiography and ideology intersect, but neither in a hierarchical and categorised power relationship, nor relationally quantified in terms of minority or majority. In the postcolonial context,

the concepts of minority and majority have become ideologically premised in terms of those 'in' power, the dominant mainstream powers, and those on the margin, often proposed as voiceless and suppressed. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, a different notion of minority is postulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.³⁰ They painstakingly argue the difference between minor and minority, and simultaneously postulate the re-invention of new modalities and an amalgamation of major and minor in the global context.³¹ They ask:

30 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op cit, p 101

31 Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor entails a variation on the notion of postcolonial minority, which entails an entity of lesser importance in the presence of a major power. The authors use major and minor chords in music to illustrate their concept of modalities of culture, where minor and major co-exist in harmony, though being ambiguous: 'It is true that the minor "mode" gives tonal music a decentered, runaway, fugitive character due to the nature of its intervals and the lesser stability of its chords. This mode thus has the ambiguity of undergoing operations that align it to a major model or standard at the same time as it continues to display a certain modal power (puissance) irreducible to tonality, as though music set out on a journey and garnered all resurgences, phantoms of the Orient, imaginary lands, traditions from all over. But temperament, tempered chromaticism has an even greater ambiguity: stretching the action of the center to the most distant tones, but also preparing the disaggregation of the central principle, replacing the centered forms of continuous development with a form that constantly dissolves and transforms itself... By placing all its components in continuous variation, music itself becomes a superlinear system, a rhizome instead of a tree, and enters the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks are a part.' *ibid*, p 95

Must a distinction then be made between two kinds of languages [as a symbolic construct], 'high' and 'low', major and minor? The first would be defined precisely by the power (*pouvoir*) of constants, the second by the power (*puissance*) of variation.³²

Rubber Duck functions neither in minor nor in major mode within the multiplicity that is the global environment of voices, products, organisations and systems. To some extent, removing the hierarchical dimension of power in this configuration turns the discourse into an empowering one on identity whereby quantitative or evaluative alignments are dispelled, and major and minor dissolve in the modality of shared histories and memories. Its monumental size makes it impossible to ignore the yellow bath duckling and raises awareness of difference and alterity. Such agency, 'harmonising' minors and majors, is reflected in Braidotti's view that

The becoming-minoritarian, or becoming-nomadic is the pattern of subversion, which is open to both the empirical members of the majority (the 'same') and to those of the minority (the 'others')... As Deleuze and Guattari argue: the centre has to deconstruct its powers and let them lie, while the margins are the motor of active processes of becoming.³³

As a minor form, type or variant in the context of the hosting country, *Rubber Duck* ambivalently performs boat identity in different port environments, thereby presenting a global identity with nomadic junction and collective unity as ideology. Following Sutton and Martin-Jones's³⁴ commentary on the two authors' construct of minor,³⁵ *Rubber Duck* demonstrates that to act (or function) in a minor way is not inevitably to oppose a dominant system, but to inhabit the system and change it from within; also, to work in a minor way does not necessarily imply being a minority. Whilst, as artwork, *Rubber Duck* presents Otherness as amusement, entertainment and a sense of belonging through familiarity with the recognisable yellow bathtub duck, it simultaneously evokes new questions about power relations that do not pertain to post-colonial constructs of race, gender and culture, but to the ideologies, perceptions and power relations within the art world itself.

MIGRANT AUTOBIOGRAPHY

To the unwitting public, *Rubber Duck* simply 'arrived' in the port and other out-of-gallery exhibition contexts, not dissimilar to the recent media images



Syrian refugees in a rubber dinghy arriving in Lesvos, 2015, photo credit: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0, International License

- 32 Ibid. The authors further maintain that 'First because man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian. When we say majority, we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian: white-man, adult-male, etc. Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse.' Ibid, p 291
- 33 Braidotti, 'A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-Postmodernism', op cit, p 7
- 34 Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze Reframed: Interpreting Key Thinkers for the Arts*, I B Tauris, London and New York, 2008, pp 52–53
- 35 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op cit, p 95
- 36 In the first six months of 2015, Greece overtook Italy as the first European Union country of arrival, becoming in the summer 2015 the starting point of a flow of refugees and migrants moving through Balkan countries to northern European countries, mainly Germany. Greece, Austria, and Hungary have been especially gravely affected by the nomadic upsurge coming from Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea and, as estimated by the International Organisation for Migration (Migrant arrivals 2016) nearly 37,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Italy and Greece by sea in the first twenty-one days of 2016, a figure that is roughly ten times the total for the same period in 2015. Migrants from Darfur, Somalia, Libya, Sudan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kosovo, Iraq, Iran and other countries have followed suit in the hope of a new life somewhere with
- of migrants from Africa and the Middle East on boats, arriving as 'invaders' in cities in an unsolicited way. The year 2015 will be remembered as a time when an unprecedented human tsunami of political refugees, fleeing war and persecution in the Middle East, Western and South Asia, the Western Balkans and Africa, hit European ports and other coastline points.³⁶ In April 2015 the migrant issue took on a critical dimension. Endangering their lives and sacrificing livelihoods, the nomads have been compelled to leave their countries as a result of the exponential liabilities of civil war and the terror forcefully induced by religious groups and political fanatics. It was reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that since January 2015, more than 2600 migrants have already drowned in the Mediterranean Ocean.³⁷ The metaphor of the rhizome is of particular interest to an engagement with nomadic identity in the geo-biographical context of an unkind and turbulent continent such as Africa, which has been one of the main sources of refugee migration to Europe. Living on a vast continent, Africans are accustomed to long journeys; however, poverty, violence, civil wars, imperial infiltrations and oppression have resulted in a generalised nomadic condition in which people are constantly moving and travelling in search of a better life and even survival.³⁸ Similarly, the overloaded boats of the migrating refugees on the ocean, connecting different continents and disparate worlds, reflect the notion of the transplanting rhizome. 'Writing' their autobiographies, the refugees are aiming to start a new life in a different country as a result of an unwanted socio-political present; they are experiencing separation and are mapping new unventured territories, often not without traumatic loss and exigent amputation of their past lives. At the same time, their memories, identities and histories will stay with them, creating a liminal, hybrid form of polycultural patterning in the nomadic context through the transplantation, adoption and grafting of different culture onto the self, and the homogenising effect of cultural symbols and icons. This process recalls Deleuze and Guattari's positing of the rhizomatic cultural condition as presenting history and culture as a map or wide array of attractions and influences with no specific origin or genesis, for a 'rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo'.³⁹
- The migrant situation furthermore presents an eminent demonstration of Zygmunt Bauman's notion of 'liquid times' describing humanity on the move.⁴⁰ The refugees in their roving boats – mostly inflatable rubber ducks – find themselves in a position of 'liminal drift' and do not and cannot know whether their situation is transitory or permanent.⁴¹ Their autobiographies become inscribed by a condition of being caught up in a succession of empty days of floating on the water and, after docking, living indefinitely inside the perimeter of the refugee camp in a kind of 'global frontierland'⁴² where their statelessness bestows them an almost ghostlike presence.⁴³ Abandoning all political power and cultural homogeneity they might have possessed in their home countries, the migrants become minor voices in the context of the majority and dominant authority of the country where they are seeking asylum. As voluntary homeless beggars by choice, and as a result of subjective ideology, they become stripped of their rights and bargaining clout by being dependent on charity, gift and the goodwill of the Other. Whilst the rights and voices of minor cultures (in a liberalist sense, as postulated by Deleuze and Guattari with minor and major musical

Germany, France or the UK. 'Migrant Arrivals in Europe By Sea Reached 36,556 in First 21 Days of 2016', International Organization for Migration (IOM), 22 January 2016, <http://www.iom.int/news/migrant-arrivals-europe-sea-reached-36556-first-21-days-2016-iom>, accessed 25 January 2016.

37 'Refugees and Migrants Crossing the Mediterranean to Europe', United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 11 September 2015, <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, accessed 25 January 2016. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) 'Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2014'. <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>, accessed 18 June 2015, the number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons has risen to more than 60 million in 2015. These migrants did so motivated by conflict, persecution, violence or human rights violations.

38 'Europe's Migrant Crisis', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_migrant_crisis, accessed 25 January 2016. Another statistic is that according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe, 2015), 58% of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe by sea in 2015 were adult men. The percentage of adult men was higher among those who crossed the Central Mediterranean to Italy (75%) than among those who crossed the Aegean Sea to Greece (55%). Of the asylum applications received in Sweden in 2015, 70% were by men (including minors). Men search for a safe place to live and work before attempting to reunite with their families.

'tonal modes' balanced in equal weights and distribution) continue to be upheld in democratic societies, the trajectories of migration have been shown to be accompanied by violence, humiliation and survival strategies. The autobiographies of the migrants reveal that as citizens they were major in their countries of origin, but have become minor there as a result of oppression; in the new country of destination, they arrive as minors but have the potential soon to become major through cultural and political acceptance, as well as systemic support.

In terms of the constellation of power relations, though, the tables are turned in the migrant situation, since the oppressed cultures 'offer' themselves as minorities at the mercy of the major culture. A different kind of power relation is therefore set up in which the migrants voluntarily turn from major to minor voices. Still, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor – in which major and minor exist together as multiplicitous equals – is applicable here in view of the worldwide turn towards liberalist views on migrants' human rights. As an ancillary consequence of emerging globalisation, resolutions on migrant workers were adopted in the 1990s by the United Nations, for instance, stating their right, such as Article 11, not to be held in slavery or servitude (unless of course by free will).⁴⁴ Despite such humanitarian tolerance, expressions of Othering continue to manifest in states of the Northern hemisphere, which remain obsessed by a fear of 'invasion' by perceived poor migrants from the Global South.⁴⁵ In many of the European countries receiving the migrants, such as Hungary, Germany and Belgium, rejection and refusal by the local population of the illegal immigrants has developed. The presence of cultural discrimination has emerged alongside expressions of prejudice, bias and resistance, based on personal ideology, from within and outside. The migrants have come to be considered as Others and Outsiders and as posing a cultural, political, economic and physical threat to the locals, and as the cause of rupture and chaos within a perceived stable and unified state system. Initial reactions of disbelief, surprise and sympathy in response to the uninvited migrant arrivals soon turned into a state of affairs wherein state and social measures are actively debated as to how to support and control the crowds of migrants.

A complex picture of intertwined ideologies and power relationships erupts in the migrant scenario. Dislocation disempowers by reducing authorial voice and negotiation clout, even more so when in a refugee position. West-Pavlov argues that cross-cultural selves,⁴⁶ such as the migrants, represent a 'discursive intervention in which the hegemonic public discourses of selfhood and nationalism are subverted and inverted', offering alternative subject positions, a 'platform for agency', and constitute a rupture 'driven by the demise of the 'self's sovereignty' over its own monolingual territory. Ideological discourses play out in all their manifold forms, constituting and endowing subjects with a subjectivity in which 'ideological Weltanschauungen are embedded from the outset as if natural'.⁴⁷ Consequently, the migrant autobiographies playing out become eminent examples of how nomadic movement often renders individuals subject to coercive power play.

Within this migrant refugee setting of dislocation and disempowerment, the boat serves as the symbolic container for a discharge of territorial self-agency conflating with emergent cross-cultural autobiography, staged on the interspace of ocean and harbour.

UTOPIAN AND HETEROTOPIAN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND IDEOLOGY

39 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op cit, p 25

40 Bauman, *Liquid Times*, op cit

41 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op cit, p 38

42 Ibid

43 Ibid, p 37

44 According to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Adopted by General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990, United Nations (FIDH) Office of the High Commissioner, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx>

45 As a result of ever-increasing controls on migration, the vulnerability of migrant persons to violations of their human rights is exacerbated: while the United States continues to 'protect' itself by an illusory wall, Europe strengthens controls at its external borders, forcing exiles to take ever more dangerous routes which often lead to death, gradually transforming the Mediterranean sea into a vast cemetery, Worldwide Movement For Human Rights, (FIDH), <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/migrants-rights/>, accessed 11 April 2016)

46 West-Pavlov, 'Discourses of Uprooting', op cit, p 132

47 Ibid, p 125

48 According to Foucault, 'we do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things... we live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed... Of course one could no doubt take up the description of these different emplacements, by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined... But

Whereas the migrant issue is a recent polemic, it reeks of late-modern neo-colonialism and as being in a succession of modern colonial enterprises. Motivations for, and technologies and methodologies of, nomadic movement have differed in all such exploits, but in a general sense the ideologies have remained the same: to teleologically find 'better' places, envisioned as enshrining the promise of a better life. As rhizomatic individuals, the migrants transplant themselves in order to find the mythical 'good place'. Essentially ideological and utopian, nomad activity happens in place and time, and mostly necessitates a change of place and transgression of the boundary, with survival as the main ideological objective.

There exists a marked similarity between conceptions of rhizomatic identity and heterotopian terms of the notions of isolation,⁴⁸ the intimate relationship between the rhizome or the heterotopic entity to society, and the ideologies motivating the formation of both the rhizome and heterotopia. John Marks argues that 'as with Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the rhizome brings together fragments and elements which defy the logic of representation'.⁴⁹ Both Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze show anti-utopianism in their thinking; Dehaene and De Cauter refer to Foucault's insistence on utopia as fiction and argue that:

Like Deleuze he tries to think politics and society without 'transcendence', without utopia in its idealized form. Deleuze and Foucault are anti-messianic, anti-Hegelian. Like Nietzsche, they have tried to unmask utopian thinking as idealist rhetoric about a *Hinterwelt* – a world beyond – that devaluates the world as it is – the real, immanent world. Against any teleology (of progress, continuity, utopia) Foucault puts his archaeology, the science of layers, and discontinuities.⁵⁰

As a floating vehicle or container, the boat as trope represents a means of transport inbetween places, likewise, it represents inbetweenness and nomadic movement, and in this sense connects with both rhizomatic thought and heterotopia. A principle of heterotopia is that they derive their significance in relationship to other sites as well as in the way they may be perceived from the outside or the standpoint of another perspective.⁵¹ In 'Des espaces autres. Hétérotopies' of 1984 (English translation: 'Of other spaces', originally presented as a lecture in 1967 and reproduced in Dehaene and De Cauter, 2008), Foucault describes the heterotopic image of the boat as

a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is self-enclosed and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from bank to bank, from brothel to brothel, goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens... The Ship is the heterotopia par excellence.⁵²

Entrenched in heterotopic spatiality, where difference and Otherness are articulated as post-utopian space, the boat signifies heterotopia as similar in identity to the nomadic rhizome in the sense of rhizomatic

what interests me, among all these sites, are the ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them. These spaces, as it were, that are linked with all the others, that nevertheless contradict all the other emplacements, are of two main types. First there are the utopias. Utopias are emplacements with no real place. They are emplacements that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. It is society itself perfected, or else it is society turned upside down, but in any case, these utopias essentially are fundamentally unreal spaces. There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable. Since these places are absolutely other than all the emplacements that they reflect, and of which they speak, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.' Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, *Heterotopia and The City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, Routledge, London and New York, 2008, pp 16–17.

49 John Marks, *Gilles Deleuze: Vitality and Multiplicity*, Pluto Press, London, 1998, pp 45–46

50 Dehaene and De Cauter, *Heterotopia and the City*, op cit, p 24

displacement being a response to unwanted socio-political conditions and articulating an identity of uprootedness. Presenting history and culture as a map or wide array of attractions and influences with no specific origin or genesis, the heterotopic boat reflects the rhizome that 'has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo'.⁵³ The migrants' ideologies remain personal and subjective, but their rules of engagement and adherence to state-determined rules and regulations operate in a liminal zone, neither here nor there. Or, new rules can be created, a possibility that comes into play as a result of the condition of uprootedness. Power relations then also become re-configured, possibly disputed and subverted in the polycultural context. In this sense, West-Pavlov refers to the fragmentation caused by cultural heterogeneity in reference to Foucault who, in various publications, set up an interconnection between discourse,⁵⁴ subjectivity and alterity, that posits prohibition as a discreet form of power.⁵⁵

Occupying the heterotopic space of a boat, where a newly constituted set of rules are operative, the migrants are fleeing 'sick realities'; their autobiographic journeys are ideologically fuelled by imagined constructs of a better life and a prosperous future free from political oppression and strife. Undertaking journeys towards unknown futures, blurred into uncertainty, continuously sustains failure as a looming possibility, that is, as failed teleology. Such an existential crisis situation reflects Foucault's idea of 'crisis heterotopias' that are 'absolutely temporal [*chroniques*]',⁵⁶ namely, that there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals that, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, are in a state of crisis.

Installed in harbours, lakes and rivers in different cities of the world, *Rubber Duck* floats aimlessly around in the water, simulating a yellow rubber duck in a child's bath and having no intention other than entertainment. As such, it is inscribed with an autobiography of privilege and amusement. The teleology ascribed to the boat imagery of the migrant refugees stands in stark contrast to that of *Rubber Duck*, yet as floating rhizomes both function as tropes signifying hope and expectation, although being rooted in very different intentions and teleologies. Yet, the complex ideological framework of utopian discourse embraces both the entertainment and almost glibly conceived ideology of global cohesion pertaining to *Rubber Duck* and the life-changing and life-threatening dimensions of the migrant teleology. In the image of the ocean surrounding the boat, the water functions as a fluid, liminal repository of utopian ideas projected by the diasporic migrants.⁵⁷ The coastline where the rhizomatic migrants dock, become liminal zones and inbetween thresholds where new spatial articulations and paradoxical spaces can potentially be created, characterised by interrelation rather than separation. These liminal spaces indicate an ideological space of the boundary: the space inbetween happiness and anguish, past and future, here and there.

SHIP OF FOOLS

Nomadic movement, as denoted by the boat imagery of the migrant refugees as well as of *Rubber Duck* – albeit with polarised imagery – signifies

- 51 Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopias and Social Ordering*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, p 43
- 52 Dehaene and De Caeter, *Heterotopia and the City*, op cit, p 22
- 53 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, op cit, p 25
- 54 West-Pavlov, 'Discourses of Uprooting', op cit, p 123
- 55 Foucault traces the history of sexuality in Western societies since the seventeenth century as a parabolic construct through which to set up a fundamental critique of repressive power in society. To Foucault, the learned discourse on sex that was pronounced in the nineteenth century was imbued with age-old delusions, more so, with blindness, which testifies to 'that immense will to knowledge which has sustained the establishment of scientific discourse in the West, whereas the other would derive from a stubborn will to nonknowledge'. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol 1: 'An Introduction', Robert Hurley, trans, Pantheon Books, Random House, New York, p 11.
- 56 Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans from the French, 1986, in Dehaene and De Caeter, *Heterotopia and The City*, op cit, p 18
- 57 Water and rivers have mostly determined the sites for the establishment of cities, creating green banks and a fertile surrounding region holding the promise of a good life.
- 58 *The Republic of Plato*, Allan Bloom, trans, Basic Books, HarperCollins, 1968, paragraphs 488b–489a
- 59 Potently exemplifying the idea of a Ship of Fools as having no destination and

altered power relationships through the trajectories of dislocation. The Platonian and Foucauldian notions of a Ship of Fools, as well as the very real Renaissance practice of Ship of Fools, provide a discursive framework for such nomadic imagery. The concept of a Ship of Fools originates from Plato's *The Republic*,⁵⁸ written in 360 BCE, in which he compares a state without good management to a Ship of Fools:

Though the ship owner surpasses everyone on board in height and strength, he is rather deaf and likewise somewhat shortsighted, and his knowledge of seamanship is pretty much on the same level... The sailors are quarreling with one another about the piloting, each supposing he ought to pilot, although he has never learned the art... So with such things happening on ships, don't you believe that the true pilot will really be called a stargazer, a prater and useless to them by those who sail on ships run like this?

Plato's intent in *The Republic*, to establish the foundations of an ideal state, rings true for the fugitive migrants in autobiographic pursuit of a better life, fleeing from perceived less-than-ideal states. The perils facing Plato's sailors without a good pilot are equally applicable to the real-life threats facing the migrants, since most of the direct routes they are taking by sea or by land are fraught with danger and the pilots are mostly inexperienced.⁵⁹

At the turn of the sixteenth century,⁶⁰ when allegory characterised art production in Europe,⁶¹ visual depictions of a Ship of Fools became popular.⁶² The Renaissance notion of a Ship of Fools entailed the practice of removing mad citizens – considered as Others, being unwanted, abject and incapable – from society by consigning them to ships and sending them out into the ocean without any supervision. Fundamentally, then, the Ship of Fools is abject. The boats' directionless drifting with their human cargoes on the canals and oceans of Europe is as tragic as that of the modern-day migrant refugees. In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault describes the Renaissance Ship of Fools as a 'strange "drunken boat"',⁶³ a 'pilgrimage' boat and a 'liminal'⁶⁴ vessel reserved for the 'insane'.⁶⁵ To Foucault, the Fools on the Ship are subject to the uncertainty of fate, just like the migrants at sea⁶⁶ – an allegory he uses to postulate human beings as in the hands of their own destiny:

The madman's voyage is at once a rigorous division and an absolute Passage... if he cannot and must not have another prison than the threshold itself, he is kept at the point of passage... Confined on the ship, from which there is no escape, the madman is delivered to the river with its thousand arms, the sea with its thousand roads, to that great uncertainty external to everything.⁶⁷

The migrant boats are heterotopian by conforming to Foucault's notion of the boat as in contestation of the space rejected and left behind. The boats' liminal position on the threshold inbetween places marks the emergence of a dystopian reality whereby the utopian dream becomes shattered by the failure of technology (sinking boats) and human frailty. The migrants desperately hope for a teleological good ending, but do

being at the 'mercy' of the seas, there was an incident in 1992 – uncannily similar to Hofman's *Rubber Duck* – when 28,800 plastic yellow ducks, blue turtles and green frogs were lost by a cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean, after which they travelled some 27,000 km, floating over the site where the Titanic sank, spending years frozen in the Arctic ice pack, and eventually, in 2007, started to wash up in Hawaii and British Columbia. These toys or miniature 'boats' at sea have proved an invaluable aid to science, helping researchers to chart ocean currents. Donovan Hohn, *Moby-Duck: The True Story of 28,800 Bath Toys Lost at Sea and of the Beachcombers, Oceanographers, Environmentalists and Fools Including the Author Who Went in Search of them*, Penguin Books, London, 2012. Also Ben Clerkin, 'Thousands of Rubber Ducks to Land on British Shores after 15 Year Journey', *Mail* online, 27 June 2007.

60 It is interesting to note that the idea of the Ship of Fools as a dystopian concept in the sense of a senseless journey leading nowhere emanated at the same time as Thomas More coined the notion of utopia in his 1516 publication, *De optimo reipublicae statu deque nova insula utopia*. In More's understanding of utopia, it is a construct derived from the Greek *δυσ-* and *τοπιον* that articulates the notion of a fictional society somewhere – in the imagination, in some unknown fictional or even a known location, or in the future.

61 Prime examples thereof are, for instance, Giovanni Bellini's *Four Allegories of 1490: Lust (or Perseverance), Falsehood (or Wisdom), Fortune (or Melancholy) and Prudence (or Vanity)*. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

not know whether they will arrive safely nor whether they will reach the intended destination; they travel like fools on a ship, risking their lives. They are confined to their boats, with great uncertainty and no chance of escaping from the journey embarked upon. It becomes an absolute passage that will change their future forever, whether for good or bad.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the metaphor of the Ship of Fools was revived in literature and art, and, especially since the latter half of the twentieth century, in the visual arts, film and comics.⁶⁸ Paul McCarthy's dystopian work, *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools* (2009–2010), created for the occasion of the 17th Sydney Biennale in 2010, parodies the medieval and Renaissance allegory of a Ship of Fools. This work forms part of McCarthy's Hummel series, presenting Germanic kitsch figurines of the same name on a makeshift boat.⁶⁹ In its original form, the Hummel figurines became popular at the end of World War II, when they represented a longing for home and an idealisation of family life to American soldiers stationed in West Germany. In its original porcelain form, the figurines depicted naiveté, childhood, the idealisation of innocence and unscathed youth. Somehow reminiscent of Walt Disney figuration, McCarthy's defaced, grotesque figurines still retain the traces of having been cast from a mould and, as such, suggest the blueprinting and indoctrinating influence of political and other ideological systems. Its distinct German origin sets up a reference to the programming of impressionable youth through the Hitler Youth movement (Hitlerjugend) during World War II. Power is debased and questioned through the figures of the dolls, since the impotent power of the dolls as fools on their floating boat going nowhere, and the ridicule inherent in the depiction, subvert authority in the nomadic context.

Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools speaks to a black, deteriorating, decomposing world disfigured by various ideological acts of abuse: Aryan Germanness stands in stark contrast to dark Jewishness, cruelty to compassion, and Insider to Outsider in the articulation of polarity, which acts as a disfiguring signifier in the establishment of the boundaries of Otherness. Strangeness merges with familiarity to set up inter-subjective realities that operate in the grey zone of the liminal interface.

Both utopian and heterotopian associations are conjured by McCarthy's imagery, with the boat functioning as the metaphoric container for systemic German Nationalist ideology: utopian in the sense of forcefully shaping the youth towards a better future, and heterotopian in the sense of function in terms of its own rules. Polyculturality is powerfully operative in the mix of popular culture with real history, fiction and fact, and multicultural reference with global exhibition. Depicting the child figures on a monumental scale, the work speaks of darkly corrupted, defaced and carnivalesque dystopia in the face of the reigning utopia embedded in the political motivations for war, or colonisation for that matter. In 'true' utopian fashion, authority is critiqued and the restrictive and suppressing designs of state derided. More so, the pipes viciously driven into the vocal cords of the figures, suggest the violence of an indoctrination process leading to voicelessness and dehumanisation. By substituting the medieval fools and the insane of the Renaissance Ship of Fools with 'sane' but indoctrinated children, therefore not clearly thinking for themselves, the work hints at the potential dangers inherent in heterotopic isolation and political utopia-gone-wrong.



Paul McCarthy, *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools*, 2009–2010, bronze, 180×192×96 inches (4572×4877×2438 mm), photo: courtesy Mnuchin Gallery, photo credit Joshua White/JWPictures.com

62 Such as Hieronymus Bosch's *The Cure of Madness* (1475–1480) and *The Ship of Fools* (c1490–1500); literary works include Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise Of Folly* (1511); and in 1494 Sebastian Brandt published a book of satire, *Ship of Fools* (German: *Das Narrenschiff*, Latin: *Stultifera navis*), which most probably informed many of these works significantly and determined English satire. Brandt's *Narrenschiff* included the first commissioned illustration of *Ship of Fools* by Albrecht Dürer.

63 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Richard Howard, trans, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 1961, p 5

64 Ibid, p 7

65 Ibid, p 6

66 Ibid, p 11

67 Ibid

68 Such as the strip printed in Brown and Watson's 1976 *Planet of the Apes* Annual, featuring the characters from *Planet of the Apes*, illustrated by Oliver Frey and a TV series; a cartoon series entitled *Ship of Fools* released by Caliber Comics in 2013; a major dance event, 'Ship of Fools', presented on a boat in 2013 in Miami by the Cool Junkie DJ club; and an exhibition by Romanian artist Mircea Suciuc entitled 'Ship of fools' at Zeno X Gallery in Antwerp from 20 April to 11 June 2016.

69 Hummel figurines are a series of porcelain figurines based on the drawings of children of Sister Maria Innocentia Hummel that appeared in the 1930s in Germany and Switzerland. These became popular through the printing of postcards and later they were cast in porcelain.

70 George Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, Allan Stoekl,

In *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools*, paintbrushes, pipes, and buckets overflowing with foam resting on a plush carpet are carelessly scattered around the base of the ship. The pipes also become reminiscent of the rhizomatic tubers that grow underground from a weed's rhizome; as such, the tuber aids in the propagation of new plants, which can result in exponential growth. Rhizomatic imagery here evokes reference to hope vested in the possibilities of recovery and recuperation after periods of war, destruction or political battle and, in the case of the migrants, to the nurtured hope of a new life on a different continent. These people are leaving behind precious possessions and cherished relationships, but also the abject muck of political strife, oppression and hardship. Value hierarchies of high and low informed their decisions to take on the hazardous journeys by sea. Seemingly representing unwanted remnants of the work's construction, the objects at the base of *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools* become both abject and sexualised, and function as symbolic excess, expenditure and excretion. Time, process and emission, depicted as an orgasmic outflow or the lancing of a pimple, find correlation in Bataille's notion of base materialism⁷⁰ and his argument that the

capacity for man to stand upright, and all that flows from this (knowledge, reason, tool use, humanity, etc.) is dependent on the ignominious base matter of the big toe. Despite man's dependence on the big toe for producing him as an erect being because he is standing, he then looks down on the base matter of his big toe as disgusting: 'But whatever the role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head, in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud.'⁷¹

'Base matter' renders the high/low opposition possible, since without the base matter of the big toe human beings could not stand erect, and so would be deprived of the 'heavenly things', the ideal.⁷² Yet, foolishly, the facial expressions of the figures in *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools* depict lambent elation and ecstasy, with the central highest figure looking up towards the sky, as if in teleological expectation of a magnificent ending. The dolls' mouths are blatantly rounded, as if sucking, and their Pinocchio noses simulate erection, both suggesting desire, so that the Bataillean transcendent eroticism as an encounter with 'divine totality, the eruptive, exuberant continuity of things' become applicable.⁷³ Imagery of waste, and seemingly badly cast sculpture suggesting error, evoke associations with 'low' or 'minor' and a deconstruction of values as a kind of border-crossing. Through the abject imagery, *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools* evokes a sense of polarity and irony that speaks to notions of minor and minority, and to the unsettling clash potentially lurking in difference.

West-Pavlov argues that the explosive force of 'unruly' autobiographical discourses can hardly be underestimated and that it becomes all the more subversive and powerful when nationalism and autobiography converge.⁷⁴ In *Ship Adrift, Ship of Fools*, a disruption of space and nomadic identity is articulated through the expressionistic use of a rough, raw and 'unfinished' process of bronze casting that evokes brutality, chaos, war and violence; further enhanced by the black colour of the work. The frag-

ed, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1985, p 20

71 Benjamin Noys, 'Georges Bataille's Base Materialism', *Cultural Values*, vol 2, no 4, 1998, p 501

72 Ibid

73 Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, eds, *The Bataille Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1997, p 13

74 West-Pavlov, 'Discourses of Uprooting', *op cit*, p 135

mented objects and the impaired dolls inscribe a narrative of hopelessness and fragility to their autobiographic trajectory. In contrast, *Rubber Duck*'s replication of the commercial yellow duck negates disruption and confirms structures of convention, safety and order in an escapist La-la Land, which stands in stark contrast to the riotous form of *Ship Adrift*, *Ship of Fools*. In both works' ironic engagement with populist iconography, the realities of the autobiographic consequences of human decision become potent.

CLOSING

Containing boat imagery, the selected visual texts have been interpreted as compellingly representative of a nomadic human condition and demonstrate the radical liminality and inbetweenness thereof whereby resolution is continuously deferred through states of volatility, transitivity and transience. In the course of the nomadic events playing out, power constellations unfold and non-unitary subject construction emerges as a liminal process, a grey zone, where mixes and blends of culture and identity transpire and new memoirs are written. In such polycultural conditions and rhizomatic circumstances, the rhizomatic nomad undergoes transformation on many levels and new identity 'growths' are sprouted through various grafting processes, creating hybrid identity, and as evident in minors and minorities filling the gap of the inbetween in the space of power.

Through an investigation of boat iconography, it has been demonstrated that autobiographical discourse yielding power constellations continue to manifest as one of the most potent forms of ideology located in selfhood as well as in Others. Whereas the migrant boats and *Rubber Duck* postulate ideologies of good ending, the makeshift boat in McCarthy's *Ship Adrift*, *Ship of Fools* signifies a sense of loss of teleology, since it remains static, not moving nor sailing; as such, it evokes paralysis and impotence. Embedded in the depictions of boat, autobiography produces ambivalent comment on the nomad condition as a human order of utopian hope-in-tomorrow and survival. Autobiography remains an incomplete project and continues to linger as an inflatable, floating rubber duck on the ocean of life.