

Bord(h)ers. Why gender matters in migration and art?

by Iuliia Lashchuk

Feminization has taken an important role in the discourse of migration. The question "If gender matters?" has changed into "Why gender matters?". Such changes of perspective allow us to discuss the role of gender in the migration process in a completely different way. The unique experience of women with migrant backgrounds becomes more visible. Simplified statistical units finally show their faces. Gender-neutral migrant becomes a woman. The migrant woman, as the Other, is excluded from society both for her origin, background and for her gender, but as an artist she can bring into discussion her voice and visualize her experience. The aim of this text is to characterize a big group of Ukrainian migrants living abroad, which is still invisible – artists, with a focus on female artists – and show their personal story of movement and crossing borders, both physical and mental, represented in the artistic works of Ukrainian female artists, who for many reasons moved abroad or were forced to change their dwelling-place. The article analyses the historical reasons for Ukrainian female artistic migration and follows changes of identity by looking at the example of two works of art of two artists with a different experience of migration – both voluntary and forced.

Keywords: migration, gender, art, nomadism.

As a woman, I have no country. (...)

As a woman, my country is the whole world.

Virginia Woolf

A place on the map is also a place in history.

Adrienne Rich

Modern science has reached the point that it is impossible to speak of certain phenomena from the standpoint of exclusively one discipline. Analysis becomes complex, balancing on the boundary of several disciplines and thus enriching the research. Migration is, in fact, an area that needs an integrated approach, given the wide range of issues and peculiarities that must be taken into account when analyzing a particular area. In the media (including Ukrainian media as well), a huge and very diverse group of Ukrainians in Poland are still called "labor migrants", and the economic situation is frequently mentioned as a reason for the Ukrainian migration to the European Union. In fact, such studies and terminology related to it were stuck in the 1990s, when Ukrainian migration to Europe was indeed almost

exclusively economic. Now, although the economic component remains dominant, the range of causes is much wider, and the migrant is no longer a unified, faceless statistical unit, but a person with his or her own face that has to be shown. Moreover, it is important to finally separate male migrants from female migrants, and to study their experiences separately taking into consideration their gender and diversity of problems they face because of that. Working on the crossroads of several disciplines – philosophy (including ethics and aesthetics), art studies, gender studies – and immersing them into a very practical context, while working with Ukrainian artists in Poland, I decided to start with a mapping that would help me to characterize Ukrainian female artistic migration. As the idea of Ukrainian migrants in EU is still very simplistic and reduced mainly to economic migration with a clear division into women (cleaning and care) and men (construction), it is first worth highlighting and naming the phenomenon of artistic migration and characterizing quite a large group of Ukrainian migrants in EU, placing it on a migration map, and second, analyzing the impact of migration on the gender dimension, going far beyond gender roles. In addition, it is important for me to define my place in this whole structure. Therefore, referring to the term of the American feminist philosopher Donna Haraway, “situated knowledge”, which describes how gender situates knowing subjects, I claim that it might be postponed and require a (female) researcher to determine her own place in scientific discourse.

The metaphor of vision that is used by Haraway to describe the notion of “situated knowledge” is connected to the notion of “power to see” and is determined by Foucault’s knowledge-power relation, “Vision is always a question of the power to see – and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?”¹ We are not just seeing; we create our own way of seeing due to the position we take in this relation. Seeing from the (same) point of view means to think with, to be able to understand, situated knowledge in opposition to view from nowhere means to be an active, decisive subject. This is the reason I approach this topic as a researcher, a migrant woman and a curator. The basic concepts that interest me are identity, memory, home, homelessness, and homefulness (feeling of home as something internal, that can be brought to any place of dwelling), as well as borders (both physical and metaphysical). Therefore, this text will be based on the interrelation between these concepts and their significance in migration processes.

Time and space (e) (im)migration

What is migration? First of all, I do not deliberately divide the concepts of “emigration” and “immigration”. To be more precise, I do not consider such a division necessary in my research. The categories I speak of (identity, rootedness, etc.), described through the migrant’s personal experience, always include both

meanings, since they simultaneously emigrate from somewhere and immigrate to somewhere (although migration is often not limited to this segment “from A” “to B”). Therefore I consider it is more correct to use the terms “migrant” and “migration” as the clarifying concepts of “emigration” and “immigration” are concepts that describe the phenomenon of migration according to the place and prospects of those who are in this place: either the sending or receiving societies. Besides, the reason for the use of the term “migration” as more universal and not attached to a specific place is the transgressive nature of migration.

The moment when a person goes to travel² is an “event,” the beginning of the situation of transgression. That is, a person is no longer here, but not yet there. Here we have a very moment of loss of rooting, which I call “a point of no return.” Unlike tourism, which has a temporary nature and involves rooting, belonging to a particular physical place to which the person returns sooner or later, migration is, first of all, a change of emphasis, the transfer of the center of the world to a new place or eternal search for it. I tend to believe that the transgressive nature of migration is an indicator of the fact that this phenomenon has its measure of time since it is impossible to determine precisely its duration and it is not known when it expires or even ends at all. Cultural theorist and art critic Mike Ball calls migration heterochronous: “Migration is a time experience, its plurality, and heterogeneity. It is a time of haste and waiting, time of movement and without a rudder; time of memory and anxious now, beyond which the expected future is not worth it.

This phenomenon, I call, is multidirectional, and his experience is heterochromatic.”³ The researcher emphasizes that the multiplicity of time existed always, but was not taken seriously because of the parallel existence of linear time, which could be measured and, therefore, understood. The heterochronism has always been something different, uncontrolled, unknown, but today it became, according to Ball, similar to the disease. Today, one can get sick from heterochronism; multiple time is becoming a problem, an obstacle, “paralyzing contradiction.” What can be considered as “the end” of migration: arriving at point B, the ability to speak a new language, or speak it without an accent, obtaining citizenship, complete integration (but is it possible?) or assimilation (but are there some criteria?)? However, Ball is convinced that multi-timing can have positive effects, when different time dimensions, overlapping, create a feeling of integrity. Migration is duration, constant here-and-now, but it also is a situation of living at different times at the same moment.

Understanding the multidimensional nature of migration is precisely the non-linear way of thinking that is needed to understand the essence of this phenomenon in general. Since the criteria for time and non-time migration is very controversial, I intentionally leave the question of the “timeliness” of migration unanswered, partly returning to it later when discussing Anna Kosarewska’s project *Redirecting through*. With questions about the heterochronous nature of migration, one needs

to be careful, but its physicality is evident and beyond any doubts. Migration is, first of all, a change of place. A migrant leaves his home as a geographical, historical and emotional space, which has always been the center of the universe, shaped his notion of the surrounding world and his own identity, where the most significant events in his life took place. To emigrate means to leave this House, to cross the physical boundary between “before” and “after” (can this boundary ever be crossed?), between one’s own and another. However, in my opinion, the issue is not that much a question of the place as such, but rather of someone’s belonging to this place. Leaving a physical place means the loss of connection, the interruption of the infinity of the continuation of personal history and personal experience right here, in this very place. Each migration is an event that provokes critical changes that are related not only to space but to the human’s dimensions that depend on this place: identity, memory, social status. Migration is an exclusion from the “the meanwhile” of national time.⁴ To migrate means to be in a transit situation, somewhere between, to be always in motion, and to some extent get rid of the roots, at least those physical, that over generations determined dwelling of the whole family in a particular place. Interestingly, in many cultures such biological metaphors as rootlessness, tumbleweed person⁵, rooted up, and so on, have long been used in describing the situation of migration. The biological notion was used in their theory by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, while they were speaking of the rhizome as a new form of thinking and existence in the world. It can be said that migration, which is no longer linear, is not limited to a route from point A to point B, it is a rhizome from which alternate realities, worlds, and identities grow.

To go out

The question of rooting arises when we talk about “going on travel” and leaving one’s own home. Following cultural ideas about a house, as a woman’s sphere, it is precisely in this place that the problem of gender division appears and affects the idea of belonging. A woman who, under pressure of circumstances or voluntarily leaves the House, thereby breaking the cultural codes defined by society, erases the line between private and public. If in Western Europe, starting from the middle of the twentieth century, the structure of binary logic, which involves the normative co-dependence of specific characteristics and gender (male-culture, woman-nature, activity-passivity, public sphere as male and private sphere as female) was questioned by second-wave feminist critique, I tend to believe that in Ukraine such a division of roles is questioned much later by the labor migration of the 1990s, which has a “female face”. Of course, we are aware of independent travel by Ukrainian female intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century such as Lesya Ukrainka or Sofia Yablonska⁶ and others, but one should admit that

that phenomenon was rather an exception and had a clearly expressed social and economic component: women who could allow themselves to travel were women of a particular social and intellectual level. The time from which the mass migration of Ukrainian women begins is a crisis period after independence⁷. Women of the 1990s who went “to make money” reversed the “traditional” male-oriented notion of earning money, becoming the only family breadwinners, unknowingly opened up opportunities for the next generation. Historically, the role of women in migration processes was either the role of Penelope, who was rightly expecting her man or his companion in migration, whose function was often reduced to taking care of her husband and children in a foreign country. Migration of the 1990s, despite all the negative factors of women’s labor migration and the phenomenon of so-called “Euro-orphans”, which described the generation of children of the 1990s whose mothers went abroad, played a significant, emancipatory role and led to the fact that today Ukrainian women have the right to choose: to leave or to stay. Thus, unknowingly destroying the neo-traditionalist cult of Berehynia⁸ – the fertile Mother who whose purpose was to replace a woman by the notion of Mother and Motherland and basically make her a political and nation-representative tool, the wave of labor migration of Ukrainian women opened the way for the migration of modern women – not only labor but also intellectual, artistic, socially and politically active.

The female migrant as a nomad

Private becomes public, which means that the question of female identity, sexuality and freedom goes beyond patriarchal understanding and control. Moreover, access to information, the openness of borders and globalization processes add the aspect of diversity and multidimensionality to the identity of a woman. The same situation happened to the word “migrant” which loses its sedentary connotations.

In order to describe a contemporary Ukrainian migrant, intellectual, artist, social activist, I use the term nomad. In contemporary philosophical discourse, this concept has little to do with its original meaning– tribes-nomads. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with its contemporary very simplified meaning which I call “hipster-in-a-move,” which became overused lately and means basically a person who works online and change places of dwelling very often. Nevertheless, the tribe component is metaphorically present in a nomadic theory. The modern meaning of this concept was developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the 2nd half of the 20th century and named the so-called modern stranger. Using their concept in my research, I simultaneously see its weakness which I must underline. This weakness is especially noticeable if we ask: Can migrant be a nomad?

Authors of *Thousand Plateaus* would say: no. Their theory of a nomad was

built on opposition to migrants. Developing their theory on the analysis of the political system of distribution⁹, French philosophers divided sedentary and nomadic orders. In spite of migrant's situation of non-belonging to the place and its opposition to a "local", he still, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, stays within the frames of the sedentary system, basically, remains part of the state being organized and territorialized majoritarian, in contrary to a nomad who is a chaotic, deterritorialized minoritarian who goes beyond limits and comes from nowhere. Such opposition is not clear to me as being dependent on the political will both types of power are linked together and in a way are mixing. In that case, it would be logical to put into question the very possibility of the nomad in terms of contemporary political land distribution. If we keep track of the geographical distinction between nomad and migrant and illustrate nomadic order as a desert and sedentary order as a city, we will sooner or later see how chaotic and free nomads transform, and maybe even adapt and settle in order to survive. Later on, they might leave again, but the moment of coexistence is always present. However, if we go farther and add to a geographical dimension a metaphysical one, we can see that both nomads and migrants have in common their Otherness as something that is in opposition to power but also is identified and framed by power. Molar = Majority = Same is opposed by Molecular = Minority = Other.

That is why in terms of migration as nomadism, I would rather speak about migrant's becoming-nomad or becoming-minoritarian as a critique of the majority, developing nomadic consciousness as a process of transformation and going beyond the frames. In this possibility, I see a powerful emancipative component, especially if we speak about female migration. Recently, thanks to the feminist reading of Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophy, which we owe first of all to Rosi Braidotti, the nomadic subject took on its female face and experience. What is "becoming nomadic" then? Braidotti claims: "Becoming nomadic means one learns to re-invent oneself and one desires the self as a process of transformation. It's about the desire for change, for flows and shifts of multiple desires. Nomadic theory rests on a non-unitary, yet politically engaged and ethically accountable vision of the nomadic subject. Nomadic thought stresses the need for a change of conceptual schemes altogether, an overcoming of the Dialectic of Majority/Minority or Master/Slave as the Hegelians propose. Both the majority and the minorities need to untie the knots of envy (negative desire) and domination (dialectics) that binds them together so tightly.

In this process they will necessarily follow asymmetrical lines of becoming, given that their starting positions are so different. For the majority, there is no possible becoming – other than in the undoing of its central position altogether."¹⁰ In which moment does *becoming-nomadic* transform into *becoming-woman*? Braidotti has an answer:

"A nomadic becoming-woman starts from the recognition of the dissymmetry

between sexes...”¹¹

So, her nomad is a woman with a complex identity, which consists of many experiences and layers of knowledge. She is conscious of her Otherness, and she is not a silent statistic unit in a place that is alien to her, not an object, but a creative and active subject that expresses the dissymmetry of not-being-a-man. There are no alien places for her, because every place she makes her own, even being in constant motion, searching for new experiences, which is in her nature. Rootedness and homelessness intertwine in her personal experience. Homelessness is no longer a sign of the wanderer which Baumann wrote about,¹² but a sign of constant search of places, experiences, competencies, identity, and purpose. Nomad woman does not fit into statistical data. She does not match to the artificially created unified image, rather defines her limits. She has a gender and a face, and therefore her personal experience is primary, and it is projected onto collective experience and not vice versa. The performance *Redirecting Through* by Ukrainian artist Anna Kosarewska is an illustration of the author’s nomadism. Visually this performance is very “local,” rooted in the Ukrainian context and tradition, while at the same time it touches on the topics of the transnational female experience. Kosarewska uses very recognizable ethnic images and symbols: her outward appearance resembles the iconic image of the Virgin Mary, crying with bloody tears, an embroidered towel with the inscription “bread-salt” referring to the topic of the House and hospitality.¹³ At the same time, the audience is shocked: the artist publicly shows the taboo of the nude body, covered by very tight bandages. Her bleeding body, together with a grimace on her face gives us an impression of sharp physical pain. In order to make her pain both more visible and more absurd, the artist starts to perform, it would seem, the usual (traditional) women’s work such as embroidering, but we see that she is embroidering on her own body. The physical pain turns into metaphysical pain; the pain of a particular female body represents the pain of being wounded by the wars and conflicts of the body of the country, which is also a woman. Overcoming physical pain, shame, erasing the line between private and public, transcending mental and physical boundaries, the artist crosses the physical boundaries between Ukraine and the world and transfers her own bodily experience to a borderless plane

The bodies, as well as geographical borders, have many unspeakable issues. Changing roles (social, gender, political) in the borderland situation create a crash of identity. Long-standing questions about nation and border issues exist much longer than one human life. These games could also be played on one particular female body. To be a Ukrainian woman means: “to consist of mixed blood and genes of a few nations, to speak the language of the invaders, to be born in a country that no longer exists, to be raised under the pressure of power, and to fight with authorities.”¹⁴

As we see, Kosarewska goes not only beyond the geographical boundaries but

beyond time limits. Her performance is limited in time, but the experience on which it is based is heterochromatic and combines different historical layers.

Her own body becomes a platform for political games: the artist reflects on the questions of ethnic conflicts, the constant movements of borders, including the one between Ukraine and Poland, political transformations, changes of national identity and its authenticity. An unprotected, vandalized female body symbolizes the fragility of existence, the collapse of identity (at least a geographical or national one), and the need to create a new type of it: hybrid identity beyond borders. She is lost between identities and languages and the only thing she has left is silence during the whole performance. In Julia Kristeva's prominent text *Strangers to Ourselves* one can find a chapter perfectly describing the situation Kosarewska is trying to present. She writes:

*Silence has not only been forced upon you, it is within you: a refusal to speak, a fitful sleep riven to an anguish that wants to remain mute, the private property of your proud and mortified discretion, that silence is a harsh light. Nothing to say, nothingness, no one on the horizon.*¹⁵

We can however ask: but do we really have nothing to say? Is the opportunity to speak voluntarily rejected? It seems that the silence of the Other is a prolonged state of frustrated numbness, caused by the awareness of its separateness, not having the right to speak. Indeed,

*it is not the silence of anger that jostled words at the edge of the idea and the mouth; rather, it is the silence that empties the mind and fills the brain with despondency, like the gaze of sorrowful women coiled up in some nonexistent eternity.*¹⁶

The artist finally raises her voice. The moment when the nervous silence finally interrupts the scream of the performer is one of the strongest in this work. All the stratification of painful experiences, cultural taboos, both impotence and the unbearable force that finally breaks out from the inside, fill the space of the gallery by a single sound stream of the female voice, bringing back the viewers and the artist to this particular moment, to this particular physical place.

Female migrant as the Other

In contrast to Kosarewska's voluntary migration and conscious nomadism, the art migration of Lia Dostlieva is forced, and her nomadism is a reaction to lose. When dealing with the subject of social alienation and representing thousands of displaced people from occupied territories, Lia chooses as the symbol of her identity, the ancient image of cynocephali, people with dog heads.

Cynocephali were described in many ancient texts, but Lia in her project is referring to the one of Simmias of Rhodes, an ancient Greek philosopher:

*A giant race, half-man, half-dog, live there,
Beneath their shoulders grow the heads they wear;
Jaws long and lank, and grizzly tusks they bear;
Much foreign tongues they learn and can indite,
But when they strive to speak they bark outright.¹⁷*

In the description of her project, the artist uses a term *contemporary cynocephali* to name all the displaced people from the Donbas region, who are alienated from the society alike like their ancient prototypes: “Cynocephali can be seen all around the world nowadays. Their disturbed nest spread its sprouts everywhere infiltrating the areas inhabited by the regular humans. They walk the same streets that we do, ride the same buses, and even send their kids to human schools.

They can start talking to humans or even suddenly touch them. But they nevertheless forever remain only half-human themselves. The social alienation of the people who were forced to leave the occupied Ukrainian territories made them contemporary cynocephali expelled from their homes. At this moment they remind the dog-headed people seeking shelter among the regular humans, desperately and fruitlessly trying to dissolve among them, to be like them.”¹⁸ To be a “half-person,” a non-human, an uninvited guest, a stranger, an Other, means the need to accept a new identity, created by someone else. In order to emphasize the problem of alienation, and at the same time to get rid of her Otherness by publicly accepting it, Lia Dostlieva has started the project *The Cynocephali of Donbas*. She creates personal cynocephali-dolls for each migrant from the Donbas region who feels alienated and declares its will to participate in the project. The strange creatures made by Lia have heads of dogs with big human eyes, more precisely with only one eye, and the other is always some out-of-here, nonsensical, hyperbolized and artificial. Their bodies are always human, but human hands and feet are not given for everyone: sometimes one cynocephali has something similar to a paw, and another one has mites. It is evident that despite their dog heads and social alienation, one of them is still more human, and someone is less human. It depends on the environment, on the social status, on the place, on the happy coincidence, etc., but they are different even between themselves, being at the same time aliens and others. Their heads are disproportionate to bodies, sometimes too large, and sometimes too small, but it seems that this was the intention of the artist - to make her cynocephali as much unattractive, disproportionate and illogical as possible. Sometimes it seems that some of them smile, but it is challenging to identify their very “other” faces. They do not have any sexual characteristics, but for Lia Dostlieva they need to have a gender. She labels each of them with the word *kinotsefal* (he-cynocephale) or *kinotsefalikha* (she-cynocephale), indicating from which city they originate as well. All of them, like the artist herself, are non-humans, they are more

animals than people. Cynocephale is the one who is always “outsider” in opposition to “local,” the Stranger, the Alien that does not belong here, the one who brings bad news that “locals” do not want to hear. Voluntarily calling themselves cynocephali, they acknowledge their differentness, but also distinguish themselves from what is human, because, as Zygmunt Bauman wrote:

[...]it is a human, all too human habit to blame and punish the messengers for the hateful contents of the message they carry from those baffling, inscrutable, frightening and rightly resented global forces which we suspect as the culprits of the agonizing and humiliating feeling of existential uncertainty which despoils our confidence and plays havoc with our life plans.¹⁹

At the beginning of this text, I underlined that I deliberately use more broad term migration because I do not want to be attached to the particular point of view (both geographically and metaphorically) but in this very moment it worth emphasizing the “immigrant” nature of *The Cynocephali of Donbas*. The feeling of alienation in their own country transforms into a feeling of double Otherness and extreme alienation abroad, for example, in Poland, where the project is being implemented. At the same time, the migration art created by Lia Dostlieva embodies the movement and politicization of aesthetics, creating with her project a new system of knowledge and network of links. Creating and showing *The Cynocephali of Donbas* in Poland, the author goes beyond personal experience by reformulating it and representing the collective experience of a particular region, becoming a politically active nomadic subject, which Rosi Braidotti is writing about.

Bord(h)ers – voices from abroad

In 2016 I started the art research project *Bord(h)ers* – the cartographies of Ukrainian female migration, which aims to discover how the changing of the dwelling place affects the identity of the female artist and how is it represented in her art. I conducted interviews with six Ukrainian artists living in six different countries: Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal and asked them about their personal experience of movement. I use just their names and cities without surnames, although they can be easily recognized. Why do I do this? Firstly, because no matter who you are in your country, in a new place of dwelling you have to start building yourself from zero and the only two things that remain are the name and the country that puts you into the box:

So when they ask me where I am from, I refuse to answer this question. It is often taken as an offense. But, first of all, this question itself is an offense to me and I have the right not to provide any answers. The same concerns the questions if I want to have children or not, if I am married and how old I am. It is only of my own concern. However, this is a very French way to say: hello, how are you? Where are you from? Couldn't you talk to me without knowing the fact

about the place where I was born? This classification should be put into a small box right away: this girl from Ukraine.²⁰

Secondly, because the name is the first to uncover the Other, but also is always the first thing to change:

My real name is Iryna, spelt with a “y” and pronounced as “Irina” in Italian. Are you from Russia? No, I’m not from Russia. But you have a Russian name. I was so tired of explanations that started to use the spelling of my name with an “e.” And now I am used to be called “Irena”, even at home. So that’s how I got rid of Russia. It is a huge task to prove who you are and what you are, forget explaining that you are from Ukraine and not from Russia – I was not happy about it.²¹

Topics that appeared during our conversations varied from the question of stereotypes or experienced “everyday racism” to the discussion about what does it mean to be a female migrant artist. Stereotypical images of the Ukrainian woman as a care-worker or cleaning lady still dominate in public opinion. Thus, the geographical ancestry of the women who do not do such work automatically relates her to this stereotypical and simplified image and Irena experienced it as well:

There were stereotypes, of course – most Ukrainians here are working as nurses for the elderly or as cleaning personnel. Even the cleaning lady at our office is from Ukraine. Still now, when I’m presenting my art at exhibitions, I hear: Oh, I also have a Ukrainian working at our home. Ok, I say.²²

Some of the stereotypes that Ukrainian women face abroad, are so-called “positive stereotypes” that nevertheless deface the reality and create unjustified generalizations: “There still exists a notion of *femme de l’est* – an image of a woman from the Eastern Europe, who cooks well, is tender, sincere and kind and never disagrees even with a word. In short, it is a positive cliché.”²³ Another important issue that arose in the project was related to the Ania’s experience of motherhood abroad and its influence on her art:

I got pregnant and we moved here to give birth to the baby. At first it was hard to paint again after the pregnancy. The focus shifted entirely to the child. My work changed too. For example, the idea of a series of female portraits came to me after that. I enjoy drawing women and the topic of femininity.²⁴

At the end we came to more universal topics such as: where do I belong and who I am here? As already mentioned above, there are many “biological” metaphors used to describe the situation of migration. One of the interviewees, Julia, compared herself moving to another country to the flower of hortensia that changes color:

Depending on the soils, the flowers of hortensia change their color from light blue to white and pink. I wonder, if we also change depending on the soil?

Living here. Not in terms of hairstyles or clothing, but in term of our true selves – do WE change? I should ask those who knew me before. But I know for sure that I've changed. Having arrived there, I'm not there anymore. I used to have a picture in my mind that the body is here, but my head and my legs are somewhere. Perhaps everybody goes through such a moment. It is for the first time I feel well where I am. I mean, I feel Hamburg as my city now. But when I come back to Lutsk, I am comfortable there as well.²⁵

But when we completely change color, does it mean that the process of movement has ended? Does the color change forever or do we become a hybrid mixture of colors appearing depending on situation and geographical place? *Bord(h)ers* turned out to be

the stories of fear and victory, people and indulgence, cities and countries, memories, plans, dreams, stereotypes, alienation, surprise, disappointment or on the contrary – admiration. Travels of the contemporary Ukrainian nomadesses in time and space are reflected in their creative work and in their original artistic style, represent the search process of their identities and place in the world.²⁶

Conclusions

Feminization has taken an important role in the discourse of migration. The question “If gender matters?” has changed into “Why gender matters?” This perspective changes allow us to discuss the role of gender in the migration process in a completely different way. The unique experience of women with a migrant background becomes more visible. Simplified statistical units finally show their faces. The gender-neutral migrant becomes a woman.

The migrant woman, as the Other, is excluded from society both for her origin, background and for her gender, but as an artist she can bring into discussion her voice and visualize her experience. The article presents two completely different examples of Ukrainian female art migration. Deliberately or not, both artists use their own experience, projecting it on the collective experience of the country from which they originate. Importantly, the origin, belonging to a particular culture, although it does not determine the entire identity of the artists, sets a course in its quest. The new, hybridized (due to migration and the imposition of various cultural codes, languages, contexts) identity of the artists remains essentially very local, situated (coming back again to my interpretation of Donna Haraway's term). I am aware of the fact that the art of the two artists that I have chosen is very diverse and not limited to selected works. Nevertheless, I find them very representative if we talk about collective consciousness and traumatic memory, as well as features of female traumatic (and/or bodily) experience. Nomadic thinking allows both artists to look at their own identity in a translocal context, let us say above the borders. It makes it possible to apply new forms of expression as forms

of communication between the artist and the viewer, regardless of its nationality and knowledge of the Ukrainian context.

At the end of our talk Julia, the Ukrainian artist living in Hamburg, made a brilliant comment that can summarize everything that was said above about personal experience becoming transnational experience:

One day in Berlin metro I saw a woman yelling only one word: Neeeeeein! (No!). It was so scary. I often think about her, about the power of one word. It is the same with the arts. It makes a person look back and understand what can happen next. When I was presenting The Woman and the War as a performance, women from different countries came up to me and hugged me. They were sobbing. No explanations needed. Everything is inside us. The question is which means you use to present it: one word Nein or something different.²⁷

About the author:

Iuliia Lashchuk is a Ukrainian curator, cultural manager, researcher and journalist living in Poland. She is interested in contemporary art, female migration and philosophy and works on issues of identity, space, borders, nomadism and migrating art. She currently works in the research project “Cartographies of strangeness, otherness, and (ex)(in)clusion. The perspective of contemporary philosophy and art” (University of Warsaw). She has been the curator of the Gallery of the Ukrainian House in Warsaw since 2016. Being a migrant herself, collaborating with Ukrainian female artists as a curator and doing her research at the Department of Philosophy, she combines theoretical and practical approaches in her work. Since 2016 she has carried out her art research project “Bord(h)ers that explores physical and mental borders women face. In 2018 the book “Bord(h)ers 6X6” was published based on the interviews of 6 Ukrainian female artists living in six different countries.

Endnotes

- 1 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14, No. 3., 1998, p. 585.
- 2 I call a journey here a metaphorical situation of migration that shows its continuity.
- 3 Mieke Bal, "Migracja: estetyki migracyjne na rzecz nowych sposobów widzenia", in: *Migracyjna pamięć, wspólnota, tożsamość*, red. R. Sendyka, T. Sapota, R. Nycz, IBL, Warsaw, 2016, p. 69
- 4 See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso. 48., 1983.
- 5 Refers to Ukrainian expression "liudyna-perekoty pole" (людина-перекотиполе).
- 6 Lesya Ukrayinka was a writer and intellectual of so-called Ukrainian modernism (late XIX-early XX century), who was actively involved in the emancipative movement and travelled over the world mainly because of her disease which required specific climate. Sofia Yablonska was Ukrainian traveller and writer, known for her reportages from different parts of the world (see: "Letters from Paris", "Letters from China" etc.).
- 7 I refer here to the 24th of August 1991, when the USSR collapsed, and Ukraine became independent.
- 8 Berehynia is a cultural construct based on the idea that a woman has a sacred duty to protect the house and the family. The name comes from the word "берегти" (berehty) - to save, to protect. This concept became the question of critical discussion in contemporary Ukrainian research. See: Marian. J. Rubchak, "Turning oppression into opportunity: An introduction". In M. J. Rubchak (Ed.), *Mapping difference. The many faces of women in contemporary Ukraine*, New York/Oxford, Berghahn, 2011.
- 9 See: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, London, Athlone Press, 1986, p. 380.
- 10 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Thought*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1994, p.32
- 11 Ibid, p. 31
- 12 Zygmunt Bauman, "Ponowoczesne wzory osobowe", Polska Akademia Nauk, *Studia Socjologiczne*, 2(129), 1993, pp. 7–31
- 13 In Ukrainian tradition the guest was welcomed to the house with bread and salt presented on the embroidered towel (*rushnyk*), which became a symbol of Slavic hospitality.
- 14 Anna Kosarewska, "Redirecting Through", <https://www.alexanderharbaugh.com/anna-kosarewska-vipaw2016>, accessed 25 June 2019.
- 15 Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, translated by Leon Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 16
- 16 Ibid, p.16
- 17 Robert Bland, John Merrivale, *Greek Anthology*, <https://archive.org/details/collectionsfromg00blan/page/120>, accessed 25 June 2019, p.121
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- 19 Zygmunt Bauman, "The Migration Panic And Its (Mis)uses", <https://www.socialeurope.eu/migration-panic-misuses>, accessed 25 June 2019.
- 20 "Anna. Zaporizhia-Paris" in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.46
- 21 "Irena. Lviv-Rome" in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.16
- 22 Ibid., p.15

- 23 “Anna. Zaporizhia-Paris” in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.46
- 24 “Ania. Kyiv-Madrid” in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.65
- 25 “Julia. Lutsk-Hamburg” in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.36
- 26 Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p. 9
- 27 “Julia. Lutsk-Hamburg” in: Yulia Lashchuk, *Bord(h)ers*, Warsaw, 2018, p.37