Migration, homelessness and internalised displacement

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Abstract

Discourses of migration tend to be decontextualised from the personal and from the lived experience of displaced peoples. Splitting migrant bodies from land, history and their socio-political realities contributes to the dehumanisation of those who have had to make a home outside borders set by colonialism, whiteness and associated ethno-nationalist violence – often because of the sequelae of colonialism, whiteness and associated ethno-nationalist violence. Engaging with the embodied experience of migrants and situating it within intergenerational contexts of homelessness and displacement is the strategy adopted here to give a name to the nameless and to theorise that which is all too often rendered meaningless, insignificant and, therefore, invisible. In this article, through an auto-ethnographic engagement with our roots in the "heart of Africa" – a part of the world so heavily tainted with blood, mutilation and imperial necropolitics – we reflect on the journey to navigating the hostility, territoriality and dislocation caused by migration. We are two Black African women with complicated and fragmented histories with the continent of Africa. We ask the reader to follow our journeys and that of 'Others' as we reflect on the psychological and ontological consequences of border violence and necropolitics. We consider what living at the border of home entails and the various ways of being and thinking we have employed to resist internalised displacement.

Keywords: Ontological homelessness; Borders; Migration; Belonging; Home; Whiteness; Necropolitics
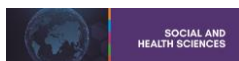
Our epistemic positions

In this article we are reclaiming our voices to write about ourselves unashamedly and, in so doing, we are also writing about 'Others' who are often written about but less frequently connected with. Thus, we are inexorably writing about the social systems and cultural phenomena that make such disconnection possible and desirable. We are

approaching this article politically and with intentionality as an act of disruption and transgression, in that we are imposing ourselves and our stories as data and as speaking truth – a truth that needs honouring without qualification. We do not believe in the modernist separation of the scholar from their socio-historical contexts or in the splitting of the body from the structures they inhabit. Like many of our foremothers and sisters, we do not adhere to the view that positivist detachment and 'neutrality', even if achievable, would serve the purpose of human emancipation and liberation (Hill Collins, 2002; Lorde, 1984; Smith, 2012).

In fact, our position is that human dissociation and disconnection are both social and psychological defences borne out of colonialism implemented and perfected to allow the coloniser to distance themselves from the violence they enacted on colonised bodies and its concomitant theft of lands and resources (Kinouani, In Press). Consequently, we are 'writing ourselves in' because fundamentally we believe the ethics of connection and vulnerability are central to the politics of love and to the upholding of our shared humanity (Kinouani, 2021). Connection to the self, to the suffering of others and to the world around us is not possible if we refuse to embrace our own vulnerability. This vulnerability stems heavily from our facing typical existential anxieties, including fears of alienation, isolation, not belonging, not being understood or not being mirrored in the gaze of others (Lacan, 2006). Arguably these are universal fears, which in our case are coloured by the workings of power and the intersections of our structural positioning as the eternal aliens of the land.

This article is structured around our rationale for 'writing ourselves in' via the use of auto-ethnographic capture; our individual case studies presenting our experiences as migrants; our reflections on 'ontological homelessness'; internal displacement; the role of necropolitics and border violence in enforcing feelings of internal displacement; and our concluding thoughts. We wrote as we felt and accepted what came to us while writing in a process that mirrors the merging of temporalities, bodies and stories that speaks so profoundly to our being in the world. We fundamentally believe this form of knowledge production has the potential to explain the phenomena under investigation meaningfully and that it is consistent with relational ethics and ontologies (Frosh & Sheldon, 2019).

On writing ourselves in

Women of colour who have gone before us have boldly foregrounded a theory in the flesh, understanding that "theory…is for the purpose of ultimately accomplishing social justice that will lead to liberation. Theory should emanate from what we live, breathe, and experience in our everyday lives and it is only in breaking boundaries, crossing borders, claiming fragmentation and hybridity that theory will finally be useful for liberation" (Hurtado, 2003, p. 215-216). This epistemic and ontological position proposes that the data-gathering tools and methods preferred by academia are not only

restrictive, but they also obfuscate truth by failing to capture multiple realities – in fact, often actively erasing multiplicity from truth.

A radical approach to data that centres the body, the obscure, the discarded, the self is thus central to illuminating marginalised experiences. It is for this reason that the method used in the 1981 seminal work *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, lies at the centre of our undertaking. Lau (2016, p. 9) highlights "...the theoretical knowledge produced in This Bridge has constructed—and continues to construct—a bridge linking feminist theory to and from feminist praxis, a tool for transformation which extends its utility beyond the confines of the academy as, paradoxically, a theory in the flesh".

We are both scholars and, like Lau and Hurtado, are theorising the world from our own flesh, using ideas and concepts that can help us bridge the link between our bodies and the world they inhabit. Stories and personal narratives are one way of honouring our shared humanity while gaining insights into perceptions, history, philosophies and the impact of navigating complex psychosocial realities. Capturing the structure and the rhythm of migrant experiences is not a new undertaking. This has been done extensively in the literature on migration. Nonetheless, even within the field – a field inextricably concerned with power and suffering – 'subjectivity' continues to be problematised. If is often deemed to adversely impact the "production of narrative data and the representation of lived experience as text" (Eastmond, 2007, p. 248).

In other words, the body and the mind experiencing the phenomenon they write about continue to have their authority unjustly disqualified precisely because they know intimately and corporeally that of which they write about. This denigration of what has previously been termed 'lived evidence' (Kinouani, 2021) and the authority of subaltern subjecthood disregards displaced storytellers as epistemic agents and delegitimises their capacity as knowers. It is therefore a form of epistemic violence (Fricker, 2007; Spivak 1988) that silences and is sustained through the pathologisation and infantilisation of migrant voices and the use of colonialist, saviourist and alleged 'neutral observer' lens by those who not only themselves do not have lived experience but often are engaged or complicit in the violence they are afforded expertise and authority to write about, often from the perspective of those they harm directly or indirectly.

The social sciences have been charged with proliferating epistemologies and knowledge practices that underpin and sustain the frontiers and border logics that uphold necropolitics (Montenegro et al., 2017). Who can write and who can speak with authority is also who can live and who can therefore sustain the sovereignty of their own body, mind and experience. Indeed, when looking at the current landscape of migration stories from the academic literature to popular platforms, it is glaringly clear that, too frequently, those tasked with writing about the migrant experience – or even about stories of unbelonging – tend to be individuals who are firmly grounded in the security and safety that homeness provides.

While there may be some value in these contributions, the configuration they are based on 1) carries the potential to misrepresent the experiences of displaced bodies, 2) repeats displacement and othering histories, 3) contributes to acts of epistemicide of the larger colonial project (de Sousa Santos, 2014) and, therefore, 4) reproduces broader systemic injustices within knowledge production systems and socioeconomic structures at large. Part of our resistance and healing process is to tell our own stories and to speak of the world in our own voices, as this constitutes an act of protest (Kinouani, 2021).

Subverting the above processes has consequently guided our choice in foregrounding this article in a form of radical discursive phenomenology that borrows from one of Heidegger's (1927/1962) core ideas in *Being and Time*; our ontology is inseparable from our capacity to conceptualise ourselves and reflect on our being in the world. However, by reflecting on and examining our embodied existence as structured by the reality of power relations and the ongoing forces of history, we are aligning ourselves with Fanon (1970). In these reflections on our being in the socially ordered world, we are asserting that we are the most appropriate storytellers of our own stories (Mapp, 2013) and, more fundamentally, our right to exist.

Therefore, our method of choice is an auto-ethnographic engagement with our embodied politics, since we are providing our own personal narratives as located within a wider cultural context (Chang, 2008) to interrogate what it means to be a migrant. We are asking specifically where, when and what 'home' is. Because we are both UK-based migrants with experience of navigating UK border laws and providing support to other precarious migrants negatively impacted by these laws, we believe the personal narratives here can contribute towards the body of work that seeks to highlight how border necropolitics (Mayblin et al., 2019; Mbembe, 2003; 2018) affect the racialised migrant's psyche, sense of wellbeing, feelings of belonging and unbelonging (Kinouani, 2017; 2021) and our collective understanding of 'home'. Therefore, this article will focus on our own unique lives while providing evidence that these lives are themselves not unique. This is in line with the long ethnographic tradition of Black feminism (Pratt-Clarke, 2018). We acknowledge that the relative privilege we each have will mean that there are limitations to our individual and cumulative perspective; we fully own this, still believing that there is value in documenting, exploring and bearing witness to our experiences.

The personal contexts

Furaha

The reality of being a migrant is one I have always been familiar with, either through my own experiences or by watching closely the experiences of those within my circle. I was born to parents who emigrated to Nigeria in the early eighties: a father from the Democratic Republic of Congo and an Armenian-Ukrainian mother born and raised in the Republic of Georgia (in what was, at the time, the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics [USSR]). It is important to note that my journey has been cushioned by relative privilege in many aspects and that my cultural grounding was very much in northern Nigeria. So, in the first instance, I could perceive that my parents were migrants – albeit very welcomed and at home in Nigeria. I – of course still being aware of my migrant heritage – felt very much at ease, loved and accepted as Nigerian, which is something I will forever be grateful for and never take for granted. From my childhood through to my young adulthood it felt balanced to accept two facts: that I was a DR Congo national by virtue of my heritage, while my personal national identity felt very much Nigerian. I managed to carry this balance around my feelings of nationality for many years, across countries and continents, as I moved for scholarship and to advance my academic career. My father's final resting place is within the soil of northern Nigeria.

Reflections have revealed that there was probably always some tension bubbling underneath regarding my national identity, because I always required a temporary residence permit to remain in, and a visa to enter, Nigeria (because I held a DR Congo passport); there were no indefinite-leave-to-remain (ILR) options available to me (Nigerian Immigration Service, 2021). This tension was heightened in 2019, when I encountered obstacles in returning to Nigeria from the UK, where I had lived, studied and worked since 2013, and I felt my only option was to apply for a compassionate visa (Gov.UK, 2018) to remain in the UK for a further 2.5 years. I experienced an emotional and mental crisis in August of 2019, when my application for this visa was denied and I was threatened with deportation (Asani et al., 2020).

While navigating the legalities of what this meant materially, having my access to healthcare under the National Health Service (NHS) cut off and losing my permanent academic post as a result of this visa denial, I was also confronted with an intense internal confusion surrounding my national identity and external pressure to explain how I'd ended up in such a mess. How could I explain the following: That immigration was always a headache for Black and Brown people? That borders imposed upon my ancestors, along with Western geopolitics, colonialism and neo-colonialism, all had a part to play in how I – and so many other Black and Brown people, passport-privileged or not – ended up in this position? That the UK's hostile environment policies (JCWI, 2021) meant that several Black British people were being deported to their deaths (Rawlinson, 2018), and that till today, many are still fighting for compensation for their immigration mistreatment (Tan, 2021)? That many individuals were and are still being deported, even amidst a global pandemic (BiD, 2020)? That as complex as my story sounded, every part was true? Perhaps, more importantly, was the need for me to confront myself (Asani, 2019) as to why my instinct was to explain myself and perform goodness, thus merely playing into the necrocapitalist machine (Singh, 2017).

The years during my fight against deportation have brought to the front of my mind my own complicity in enforcing borders, even if in subtle ways. Shukla (2016) has challenged us to desist from playing into tropes of being "the good immigrant", since

this is simply a repetition of whiteness's tendency to split phenomena, groups and individuals to maintain the illusion of independence and individualism (Kinouani, In Press). While I have no influence on border laws, I have power over how I choose to tell my own story, which is that every migrant is deserving of reparative justice for the harms inflicted upon our bodies, minds and lands, which have often led to our precarity in the present moment.

There are many Black and Brown people in a Western context who are navigating everyday life with questions, concerns and uncertainties around their national identity. These justified feelings can have an impact upon mental health and wellbeing. In my case, my fight against deportation has left me with an even more embedded feeling of unbelonging. Being finally granted a 2.5-year visa, coincidentally 2.5 years after I first applied for it, materially affects my life but does not diminish my feelings of internalised displacement. To me this is a reminder that visas are a short-term solution to a historical problem, which is borders at large.

For the time being, I do not have any grounding or satisfactory definition as to what 'home' is or could look like for me. What I have is plenty of questions with no answers: Is home a physical space? Is it the feeling of safety? Is it family and friends? Is it stable citizenship and nationality? Or is it more abstract? For instance, is home not a place but a time (Adebisi, 2020)? I know I am not the only racialised migrant with such questions (Onye & Adérèmí, 2021). It is also necessary in this conversation to make space for racialised peoples who have legal documentation that attributes nationality but still face 'othering' within their societies – in addition to the intergenerational and present-day traumas caused by slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, forced migrations, social injustice, any form of bigotry and the intersection of all of these.

My years of immigration precarity have affected my ability to connect to places and spaces, with trauma-induced fears that any mistake or misstep could mean the loss of my job, career, healthcare access and possible eviction. All these terrors from both the outside and within have at times left me in a state of suicidality that I am fighting hard to overcome. Deep and honest reflection, however, reveals that the first feelings mirroring epistemic homelessness – this internalisation of gaslighting and thus a displacement from what the mind and body know (Kinouani, 2017) – occurred in my mid-teens at the onset of my severe anxiety. I never quite made it back to being the carefree child I was before debilitating anxiety claimed me. I no longer felt at home within my own mind, within my own flesh. While I am much better at coping two decades later, those feelings persist within my core. Therefore, my conclusions are that the current iteration of ontological homelessness I am experiencing had its genesis in my internal environment but has been significantly influenced by the border violence I have faced externally. My most comfortable articulation of where home is, at present, is within liminal spaces. And this, for now, feels like resistance.

Guilaine

"Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (Said, 2000, p. 180).

I struggled with where to start when it came to articulating my migration story. This sometimes happens to me when what I wish to put into words is so deeply embodied and embedded into my very flesh. So here I will try to find the words to translate into units of shareable meaning what is mainly contained within every inch of my body – to bridge the body and the mind. Mine is a story of multiple waves of migration, too, over generations. I have, for very long, considered myself the child of migrants. This is the story that is recounted in France about my parents, who are 'from' Congo-Brazzaville. In the UK, too, the notion of 'second generation of migrants' forms a cornerstone of migration and diaspora studies. But this story is really a partial story. My parents were, in fact, never migrants. They were born French colonial subjects and it is their status as colonial subjects that later enabled them to be classified as French citizens.

I was born in Paris, unexpectedly. I often say I was displaced at birth. There is no doubt that I was conceived in the tropics of Congo and, as a foetus, I was removed from that ancestral and familiar land when my mother migrated. I am not exactly sure at what gestational stage the coldness of France became forced upon me as my new home, but the indications are that it would have been past the first trimester. I was born in winter. The fantasy of the impact of this initial dislocation may be far greater than the reality of what a developing foetus can grasp through their developing senses. As human beings, we are designed to fill in the blanks of what we do not know, after all. But I do know that I have been on the search for home from a young age and that this feeling of living at the border of home was part of what drove me to attempt to find a new home elsewhere, outside of France, and therefore to become a migrant myself, in England.

And so, I do wonder how the uterine environment, which was my home, might have changed as a result of this displacement: the sounds, the colours, the tastes, the sense of the people around, the climate, perhaps even the politics of Othering. Intrauterine environments hold so much power to formulate entry into the world, history and ancestry. Perhaps it is appropriate to think of the existence of an in-utero form of alienation. Patterson's (1982) notion of native alienation speaks something partially to this experience. Although initially formulated in the context of the enslaved infants' disconnection from their histories and ancestry, being born into a social order that forces the forgetting of one's lineage and the in-utero rupture from the known, strongly echoes it.

This initial alienation was repeated by the hostility of growing up in France. This was a country that violently colonised about half of Africa but could not fathom being confronted with the former colonised 'Other' on its soil. An extraordinary struggle for identity and belonging ensued, a struggle that is ongoing among French people of

African descent and between 'them' and the French state. "Renounce your Africanness and assimilate" is still the *ordre du jour* (order of the day). These are the conditions of acceptance into the fortress of 'Frenchness'. But even if you do assimilate, perhaps out of survival or simply because those ties to Africa will inevitably fade over time, your status as French citizen will constantly be up for debate, challenge and opposition. Every four years, pretty much like clockwork, when the presidential elections come around, questions of 'integration', of belonging and French identity occupy centre stage. The National Front threatens victory. This has been the case for as long as I can remember. Every four years we are reminded that we do not really belong 'here'. We are rendered homeless by the state. We are debated, with typical French passion.

There is only one way to be French and it is to be white. So, the story goes, at least. My parents resolved that internal conflict by simply refusing to forge emotional ties with France; like most so-called African migrants I know of their generation, they have never claimed France as their home. To them it was only ever a temporary place of abode, a means to an end. And that end was to survive, to support others to survive and to ensure that we could have the best chance in life, including education opportunities. It is almost certain that France made it near impossible for them to claim her as their home. My mother has always, for example, told us that she wants to die and be buried in Africa. This was drummed into us from a young age.

The repeated request to be laid to rest in the land of our ancestors powerfully asserts where one's sense of home and lineage lie. It also establishes that connection between death, home and homelessness. For my parents, owning land or claiming a home in France was to displace themselves from home. Nonetheless, their yearning to go 'back home' also meant that we, as their children, were not encouraged to see France as our 'real' home or unconditional or permanent home. Our house was in every sense bicultural, except for one thing: The hope was always that we would return 'home'. But this is a home that my siblings and I have never known beyond horror stories of French and Belgian colonialism recounted against a backdrop of Congolese rumba, spicy food and occasional long-distance conversations with relatives rendered strangers by time and space. My resistance to homelessness has included claiming both Congo and France loudly, unapologetically and with the confidence of white settler colonialists.

I recognise that refusing affiliation to the country of my birth, upbringing and where most of close relatives reside is simply rejecting a part of me because of the white nationalist – yet widespread fantasy – in France that Blackness and Frenchness are mutually exclusive. I left France but France cannot be extracted out of me. Similarly, separating myself from the blood of my ancestors, however messy these ties may be, would be betraying those who suffered and died, often mutilated, at the hands of colonial Europe. To me, disowning either land is doing the master's work by re-enacting splitting and colonial processes of displacement internally and, consequently, forever living in a state of ontological insecurity. I take ontological insecurity here to signify a sense of precariousness in relation to being in the world, whereby the world, the self and others

are experienced as being in a constant state of existential unsafeness, precariousness, threat or dread, leading to a sense of fragmentation and/or detachment (Laing, 1969).

I managed, on balance, to hold onto my attachment to my French identity while remaining close to my African and Congolese ancestry in the UK. Perhaps this was because there was less contestation of my Frenchness on a day-to-day basis while I was away from France. Or perhaps it was because I now had a home that felt somewhat like a home in the UK – at least until Brexit. Then, as I often say, the France I left behind came to find me: the familiar embodied precariousness and unsafeness of unbelonging; the repetition of threats of displacement and dispossession; the everyday hostility created by rising and emboldened xenophobic and ethno-nationalist discourses caught up with me and grappling with homelessness became a reality again. Of course, the reality of racial hatred and anti-migrant sentiments had never left. It was mostly dormant and in the background. Still, it allowed some of us a semblance of security, however illusory, and an opportunity to settle and dwell for a little while.

It was in my formulation of epistemic homelessness (Kinouani, 2017) that I first started to engage with the interiority of displacement. While traditionally homelessness is viewed as the absence of permanent or safe dwelling, I defined 'epistemic homelessness' as the subjective experience of losing anchor in situations of epistemic injustice and I proposed that it is an embodied displacement from one's intimate truth base because of power asymmetry, when our experience of the world is denied by those who can simply speak into oblivion. It is thus the experience of being forced out of, or to exile, what we know.

Said's exploration of exile (Said, 2000) likens it to a "terminal loss", to an embodied and permanent intense experience of mourning and dislocation. This is what is evoked in me in how I conceptualise ontological homelessness; a state of normalised grief. We may therefore say that ontological homelessness is when we experience ontological insecurity as a result of enduring or repeated experiences of homelessness and displacement. Here the displacement, rather than being from our capacity to know, is from our capacity – or the lack thereof – to experience homeness in the world, which results in a sense of deep mourning for a home that never was in the first place. It is a yearning for a lost home that does not exist and that stops us from making home anywhere else in the world. It is sitting on the border constantly. Said (2000, p. 177) may say that it is sitting at the frontier between us and the outsiders in "the perilous territory of not belonging".

Belonging and displacement

Yuval-Davis's (2006) analytical framework on belonging and the politics of belonging proposes that belonging is constructed across three interrelated levels: social locations; individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings; and ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own

and others' belonging/s. The framework emphasises that an individual's social locations at each historical moment hold specific implications and meaning within the matrix of power relations. Identifications, emotional attachments and constructions of belonging are similarly much more than cognitive stories. They speak of deep emotional investments and longing for attachment. For migrants whose social locations and points of attachment have been disrupted, the very essence, foundation and grounding on which 'belonging' can be constructed has similarly been dismantled. We see here the relational roots of internalised displacement and the deeply anchored human need for connection to places, histories and people.

Living While Black (Kinouani, 2021) posits that homeness, homelessness and belonging are central themes in African diasporic experiences of psychological distress and ontological insecurity. Our sense of homelessness is fundamentally precarious, multilayered and intergenerational. It is linked to our history of displacement through imperialism, colonialism, enslavement and associated processes. Through imperialism's expansion, dispossession of land and displacement of people marked our history as generations were dislocated from land on the continent of Africa. Further, as a result of the transatlantic slave trade, millions of people of African descent have lost connection with our ancestral home and have been displaced from land decade after decade, century after century.

Through immigration and racialised xenophobia, our cultural affiliation and attachment to the places we reside is rendered conditional. We are not allowed to make a home, as our experience of the world and of homeness are constantly denied and invalidated as chronic microaggressions remind us that we are not really from 'here'. It is no surprise that some may choose, out of shame, to cut ties or deny their ancestry in a bid for assimilation and white acceptance. However, while this strategy might provide temporary relief from shame and even a temporary place of abode, in the longer term it only amplifies homelessness.

As I (Guilaine) thought about necropolitics for the article and discussed with my co-author her struggle to stay connected to life, a story kept coming to my mind. It relates to the work I did at Yarl's Wood as Wellbeing Lead. Yarl's Wood is an immigration 'detention and removal centre', the largest in the UK. It is the ultimate place of homelessness, of non-belonging and perhaps even of 'non-being'. I worked there for about a year supporting vulnerable displaced souls, often with histories of extreme persecution and trauma, who were told, usually arbitrarily and whimsically, that they could not make the UK their home. At Yarl's Wood, the collective distress was so high that it was palpable.

Much of the self-harm was public. I remember one incident, which I did not witness directly, but it has stayed with me because it was recounted to me repeatedly by many clients and staff, perhaps in an attempt to process it. A detainee, a Middle Eastern man, had tried to commit suicide by lacerating his entire body with a blade in the middle of a

recreational section of the centre. As he started bleeding profusely, the powerless and terrified witnesses – both migrants and staff – were plunged into a state of intense shared terror. This incident crystallised the disturbance in the centre. It was a symptom of extreme racial trauma and a manifestation of border violence. It was also an apparent act of 'self-mutilation' and the source of further collective harm.

I discussed it in supervision at the time, reflecting on the symbolism of the blood poured out, the depth of the suffering but also the complexity of the layers of meaning – the disturbance it laid bare. Group analysis's concept of location of disturbance (Foulkes, 1973, p. 290) proposes that within groups, institutions or nations, wherever distress expresses itself is not necessarily – or at least not exclusively –where the disturbance lies. Disturbance speaks of relational or group phenomena that cannot be collectively owned or named. Stobo (2005) proposes that those who are Othered, in groups or within society, are liable to become the manifest site of that disturbance and thus act as a focal point for its expression. Stobo explains this propensity by positing that acts, words or behaviour that activate repressed and unspeakable racism-related disturbance are likely to become fixed onto Black or Brown bodies. Therefore, bodies with the least power are used by the collective as vessels for group disturbance.

Fanon, Klein and necropolitics

Necropolitics positions Others' lives as disposable and sacrificeable in the interest of protecting the vitality of the powerful. It normalises murder, which is not constructed as murder, since those killed are hardly seen as human and their death is easily legitimised in the name of control, security and sovereignty (Mbembe, 2018). This cult of death in the name of life makes human lives both meaningful and meaningless: meaningful because some bodies must be killed for the social order to be sustained and meaningless because some human lives can so easily be taken.

Necropower needs to invest heavily in imprisonment and detention. These are the ultimate means of hierarchisation of lives. They help to manage paranoia-filled fantasies of insecurities and uphold strict borders between the worthy and the worthless, the living and the walking dead, those whose death would create little disturbance and those whose disappearance would hardly be noticed. But, to advance the neoliberal order, detention facilities must facilitate death without being seen to facilitate death and they thus become warehouses of bodies held in conditions of death-worlds where self-harm, suicide and psychological suffering are the norm (Lamble, 2013). Since ontological death precedes physical death, annihilation always looms near in these spaces situated at the border between life and death.

There are many ways to conceptualise psychological or psychic boundaries. Fundamentally, holding boundaries means separating our internal world from intruding others. Thus, personal sovereignty from the perspective of the colonised may be understood as the capacity to uphold psychological freedom from interference from

colonial agents – an attempt to maintain psychic self-governance, self-determination. Boundaries are therefore borders that stop others from merging into us, so that the integrity of our subjecthood, our personal sovereignty is retained (Kinouani, 2021).

Sovereignty and independence are a recurrent Fanonian theme (Fanon, 1967, 1970, 2001). In particular, Fanon posits personal sovereignty as an inescapable direct correlate of political and economic sovereignty. In the same way that political and economic sovereignty is rendered impossible for the colonised, personal sovereignty is hardly achievable under colonialism.

Throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1970) makes the case that it is virtually impossible for the colonised to exist independently of the white colonial gaze and thus become an autonomous subject under the structure of white supremacy. This is not only because the Black body's very existence has been constructed out of white fantasies, but also because the white gaze has become so loaded with racist history, myths and centuries of violence that the act of gazing alone is a form of social control.

Fanon uses three mechanisms to explain how human beings come to be inhabited by the structures of society, history and socio-political realities. Colonised subjects become bodies that are colonised

1. via the collective unconscious, whereby anti-Black ideas, historical scripts and archetypes are passed on

2. via internalisation, which describes the process by which external, sociohistorical reality is assimilated into 'internal' and subjective reality

3. via epidermalisation, which is used "to underscore the profound transformation of economic inferiority to subjective inferiority"

Although Fanon does not expressly refer to Klein in his scholarship, his formulation of racial epidermal schemas and racialised transmission processes can be illuminated by a Kleinian conceptualisation of projective identification and vice versa. Projective identification offers us a framework to understand intersubjective communication and associated co-constructed action when it comes to oppression. It illuminates what, on the one hand, may be projected by individuals, groups or indeed societies because it is unacceptable to the self, and on the other hand, what may be introjected and acted out by those who become repositories of such projections.

The Melanie Klein Trust in the UK (2021) summarises the mechanism as follows:

> Projective identification is an unconscious phantasy in which aspects of the self or an internal object are split off and attributed to an external object, The projected aspects may be felt by the projector to be either good or bad. Projective phantasies may or may not be accompanied by evocative behaviour unconsciously intended to induce the recipient of the projection to feel and act in accordance with the projective phantasy.

This basic formulation of the defence mechanism already highlights its explanatory potential in the sphere of power relations and border violence. Additionally, there are various parts of Klein's sophisticated theory of projective identification that are linked with Fanon's thinking and are of interest when considering necropolitics, including 1) the merging of objects and subjects through intersubjective material; 2) the splitting off of parts of the ego, 'excrements' filled with hatred; 3) the sadistic wish to harm, control or possess the object due to fantasised persecutory fears; and 4) introjection pressures, which may be exerted on the object to feel and act in accordance with what is projected onto them (Klein, 1946, 1952).

The ultimate form of necropower may well be the capacity to have others act out one's murderous wishes and impulses through projective and identification processes. Revisiting the public distress of that suicidal detainee at Yarl's Wood, the public sharing of suffering and the blood being poured out, if not sacrificed, symbolised the blood of the collective migrant body. It spoke of a shared wound. But equally, Fanon and Klein might invite us to consider that the death wish on display perhaps did not belong to the detainee or the detained migrants group. We may argue that the suicidal gesture displayed the epidermalisation of ethno-nationalist violence and that it was an expression of internalised necropolitics.

In other words, the act of self-mutilation also spoke of the hateful and murderous anti-migrant wishes of the larger social context. Accordingly, where power asymmetry is operational, those we wish would disappear may well want to disappear themselves; those we want displaced are likely to struggle to experience homeness; and those we want dead or killed are likely to want to die and act out the hateful fantasy propagated and projected within the current socio-political context.

We could therefore add that while the migrant body is excluded from the general population by the violence of border control and territoriality, its subjectivity and psychological world is breached, entered and inhabited without their consent. Bodies that we exclude are therefore bodies that are infringed upon, that we colonise, and bodies that we can kill vicariously by their own hands.

"If you don't like it here, then just GO HOME!"

Looking at testimonies from migrant women of colour currently based outside their homelands (Asani, 2021), the theme of unbelonging resonates as a constant reminder that "'home' is not a fixed and permanent place". It is, however, a construction upon which to enact violence via forced displacement epistemically, ontologically, psychologically or physically and, indeed, too often, all at once. Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2008, p. 95) present a case study in which a migrant "has not been able to acquire a sense of either belonging or identification". Internalised displacement can often leave one feeling as though the very ability to acquire any of these signifiers of 'home' has itself been lost or is denied by the self as an act of adaptation to border

violence. This may be particularly so when the nation state imposes the performance of what Waite (2012) refers to as "neo-assimilationist citizenship" onto the migrant as part of border policy. This means that a migrant who could potentially already be grappling with their intergenerational trauma and feelings of belonging faces the additional pressures of performing this neo-assimilation, or risks further displacement.

But assimilation is in and of itself another murderous wish. And it is central to necropolitics. It is the desire to kill any sign of the Other in the Other. It is the refusal to make space for them to exist as themselves. It amounts to saying that your existence is conditional upon your killing parts of who you are and if you are not prepared to endure this ontological or spiritual death, then we are prepared for you to die physically. The fact that anti-immigrant "go home" chants are chanted even when going 'home' is impossible – often due to geopolitical interference by the very homelands from which these chanters originate – is significant here.

Saying "go home" by any means necessary – which is currently the message conveyed to most Black and Brown migrants from the Global South – be it via illegitimate repatriation, unlawful deportation, stress-induced death or suicide equally supports the hypothesis of that projected collective death wish. Evidence tells us that migrants have died and continue to die because of the ongoing collective collusion in displacing them or leaving them stuck out at sea or in 'nowhereland' – another zone of 'non-being'. The ongoing abuse and subsequent deaths of the Windrush generation is a contemporary example of both the racialisation of belonging and the anti-Black and necropolitical core of border control.

Concluding thoughts

We are 'migrants', and not 'expatriates', because white colonial supremacy has racialised the former word (Koutonin, 2015) and border laws have enforced its meaning. "Borders. Everything begins with them, and all paths lead back to them" (Mbembe, 2018, para 15). The rhetoric around 'the migrant's value' often encodes societal sentiment that migrants must perform to be viewed as human, re-enacting an additional process of displacement from our own inherent humanity. It also justifies violence and death. Migrants' psychosocial functioning encompasses experiences of ontological insecurity and all the manifestations of internalised displacement. Healthcare professionals, allies and those who act in solidarity need to take account of the multilayered sense of homelessness that so many of us grapple with, often over several generations. It is clear that border trauma plays a significant role in the formulation of how we understand ourselves and the world as migrants, constantly confronting displacement and its ultimate manifestation, necropolitics, which some may be at risk of acting out by their own hands on behalf of society at large. Resisting internalised displacement and the introjection of murderous ethno-nationalist border-related violence must be centred on the imperative to theorise and thus externalise the structural realities from our own embodied standpoint, from our flesh, and as part of that, we must

tell our stories in our own words. There is no doubt that there will be psychological and even spiritual entanglement with socio-political structures and, thus, invariably an introjection of violence, provided the status quo remains unchanged. Fanon and Klein offer particularly helpful frameworks to theorise the why and the how. For this reason, we would argue that a dream we dare to outline – a world without borders – is a critical step towards reparative justice (Washington, 2019). But equally, and perhaps paradoxically, a world without borders would also mean a world without colonial intrusion into our land, body and mind.

Bios

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