Research Article

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States of mind – political theatre at the age of nomadism

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Abstract: The review article comments on major themes and ideas analysed by S.E. Wilmer's *Performing Statelessness in Europe* (Palgrave 2018). Wilmer's analysis offers an overview of most recent as well as historical approaches to the concept of citizenship and the state which have been developed by avant-garde artists and theatre makers. The overall aim of Wilmer's survey of political art is to "assess strategies by creative artists to address matters relating to social justice". He also gives a significant amount of attention to various projects carried by German theatres which attempt to integrate resident immigrants into German society. The central thrust of his argument falls on a variety of contemporary theatrical initiatives directly concerned with the life of refugees and asylum seekers. The review highlights those aspects of Wilmer's argument which directly concern the concept of modern society, nation state and identity. Wilmer shows precisely these aspects of modern state as most destructive. The review questions that assumption, arguing that the criticism of modern society should be more subtle and nuanced and that the potential failure of responding properly to the crisis does not necessarily lie entirely on the side of the state

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History of Europe can be seen as a string of critical moments which carry great potential of altering life and influencing the shape of the Western world. Especially continuing floods of migration, invading Europe since the Medieval times, have changed demographic, political and primarily civilizational conditions in which European states were born and developed. The current refugee crisis could perhaps be seen as yet another incursion of such forces which potentially carry the energy to alter Western life and politics. However, today's refugees and asylum seekers do not come as a fearful force, but this time arrive at the shores of Europe – fortified with border regulations and guarded by military force – as homeless victims of genocidal wars. Their power is symbolic not military. Still, Europe's nation-states have largely responded with a belligerent clarion call. Therefore, although this time the arrival of the migrant masses did not carry any real military threat, it nonetheless put the foundations of social justice on trial, testing its moral responsibility and finding it wanting. In the face of the humanitarian crisis, European values of solidarity have largely been questioned or challenged, gradually dominated by selfish national interest instead of common European hospitality. The refugee debate exposed a deep crisis within the body of core Western values.

It is clear that the crisis concerns not only those who seek refuge behind Schengen borders, but equally, it affects those who maintain a safe position within them, holding a European passport. Current refugee debates have been waged not only in European institutions or national parliaments, but also in art galleries, theatres or more openly in public venues which bring arguments straight to the people. European artists, writers, playwrights and theatre directors confront the issues of migration, social justice and integration, especially in areas of exceptionally multicultural identity, with the view of reflecting the experience of asylum seekers and allowing them to find their own voice, to narrate their own story. If the

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current debates about migration have managed to communicate a single message to those who support the idea of helping "boat people" as well as to those who would rather let them suffer in whatever distant, unknown and anonymous locations of their origin, it is that democracy has failed. Those ready to assist others in their tragedy believe that it has failed by ignoring a plea for help coming from individuals deprived of basic means of survival. Democratic states, in other words, are seen as forfaiting their original, Christian obligation, as betraying their foundational ethical call. Those who would rather embrace the logic of isolation and attempt to either ignore the humanitarian crisis or simply reduce it to a local conflict awaiting a local solution, blame democratic states for allowing the refugee issue enter a European political agenda and destabilise it. For the former, democracy appears too insensitive to react, for the latter it proves itself too weak to mount an adequate defence. Artists naturally must find their own way through this commotion, by articulating voices that would both be heard and effective in confronting mainstream media and other institutional discourses.

There are at least two obligations that contemporary critical art is expected to meet; it is to offer an alternative to commonly accepted views and to frame its message in a way that differs from commonly accepted speech. The refugee crisis provokes a debate not only about the tragic fate of asylum seekers but primarily about the condition of contemporary democracy and the state of the society caught in an unbridgeable alternative of universal moral responsibility and narrow national interest. As a theme for art or drama, the crisis of migration provides precisely the message which cross-cuts complacent views about the success of modern European politics. It is one of many tell-tale signs which indicate a gradual disintegration of the social structure based on cosmopolitan values on which the post-war European politics have been founded. In the eyes of some Western thinkers the only chance for Europe to rescue itself from disintegration is to listen carefully to critical comments coming from outside of its borders. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a Portuguese philosopher of culture, suggests that Europe should "learn from the South", and that by entering into an "intercultural translation" it can construct a new epistemology based on "non-Western ethical, cultural, and political imagination" (2016, 18). His argument aims at proving that Europe can learn about itself precisely from those who observe it as outsiders. Similarly, in his study of the decline of the European project Ivan Krastev sees the refugees as new revolutionaries, who bring and precipitate a revolution of the current political system (2017, 30). Modern art and theatre by giving the voice to the refugees, by allowing them to speak and testify about their own life stories create an alternative space for articulating views which form a new kind of discourse empowered to dispute vocal populist doctrines of today's Europe and help reform it.

Aggravated refugee crisis has produced an intensified reaction of theatres and writers who responded with works aiming at not only understanding the problem of recent migration but also at considering a newly reopened rift which Ivan Krastev calls a conflict between "globalists and nativists" and through which Europe needs to define its political priorities again (2017, 34). The fundamental question in this debate refers to the dilemma of who belongs and who does not belong in the European project. The argument inevitably leads to the issue of state, and the social and moral condition of citizens happily holding European passports, as opposed to those largely unanimous individuals who are denied access through border controls and thus forced to acquire the status of non-citizens. Precisely this debate provides a theoretical and analytical framework to S.E. Wilmer's timely book *Performing Statelessness in Europe*.[1] Wilmer's analysis offers an overview of most recent as well as historical approaches to the concept of citizenship and the state which have been developed by avant-garde artists and theatre makers in response to the appearance of the nation-state in the twentieth and twenty first century Europe. The overall aim of this survey of political art is to "assess strategies by creative artists to address matters relating to social justice" (Wilmer 2018, 2) in lieu of any political solution to the refugee crisis which either individual member states or European Union as a whole have failed to produce. Wilmer looks at older, classical themes, analysing modern adaptations of ancient tragedies concerned with the issues of state and citizenship. He also gives a significant amount of attention to various projects carried by German theatres which attempt to integrate resident immigrants into German society through art and theatre. However, the central thrust of his argument falls on a variety

1 Wilmer, S. E. *Performing Statelessness in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

of contemporary theatrical initiatives directly concerned with the life and condition of refugees and asylum seekers as well as with particular strategies enabling theatre directors to communicate with their audiences.

Wilmer's monograph helps reconstruct a map of contemporary theatre and performance, testifying to the vibrancy of art exploring social and ethical contexts of the refugee crisis. *Performing Statelessness* collects an impressive number of examples proving the dynamism and critical power of art in dealing with the complexity of issues concerning refugee crisis both in thematic and formal ways. Although his grouping of individual projects might at times be disputed, especially in cases in which some critical categories could easily be transferred to cover a broader area of theatrical activity than the one intended by the author, his general idea to analyse theatrical works reflecting on the concept of migration and asylum and tackling artistic strategies employed to raise public awareness of social justice makes great sense in the light of current debates. The book's other, more subtle and unacknowledged theme concerns political or even philosophical aspects of life in the modern state. Many artistic or theatrical projects apart from their declared humanitarian message carry an implicit criticism of the state as such, particularly in its current populist and nationalist incarnation. Although Wilmer avoids any straightforward political declarations, his unavoidable scepticism towards the condition of modern, European states weaves a suspicious line of argument underpinning his artistic analysis.

One category generated by Wilmer's critical analysis are plays exploiting the mechanism of identification (chapter 3) in which spectators "become more fully invested in their [characters'] circumstances and ideological conversions" (2018, 51). It is believed that by showing the dire plight of refugees, suffering the horror of a voyage to Europe and then beset by inhuman UE regulations, the audience and primarily politicians can convert into thinking that there is an alternative to the "disorientating and oppressive conditions of asylum-seekers" (Wilmer 2018, 64, 52). Both Donal O'Kelly's *Asylum! Asylum!* (Peacock Theatre 1994) and Anders Lustgarten's *Lampedusa* (Soho Theatre 2015), present adverse circumstances taken straight from lives of those who seek refuge in the Schengen zone: O'Kelly's play shows unfair treatment of asylum seekers in contemporary Ireland, while Lustgarten's work offers a harsher, monolog account of the daily tragedy of fishing dead bodies out of the Mediterranean sea. Using raw, factual detail the plays allow the spectators to "identify with the protagonist" (Wilmer 2018, 67), but also "demonstrate the seamy reality of power politics behind official policy" (Wilmer 2018, 54). Ultimately, these plays review the policy of European nation-states in the context of justice and fairness and diagnose it from the perspective of those whose basic rights are violated and denied. The relation between state and individual grows to represent a frontline of conflict and moral ambiguity which might lead to a conclusion that obeying the law verges on collaboration with an inimical system of oppression rather than with a mature democratic state.

Documentary drama offers Wilmer a narrower heading to group plays which concern asylum themes with the use of verbatim format (chapter 4). In *Illegal Helpers* (Salzburg Schauspielhaus 2015) Maxi Obexer narrates a story of an "administrative judge" who begins to bend existing regulations in order to help asylum seekers. Acts of subverting the system from the inside seek justification in the fact that government policies do not operate with a fairness of judgement. Therefore, following them would equal "complicity". The play, then, presents "small subversive actions" and preoccupies itself with "providing role models of civil courage" (Wilmer 2018, 81) needed to break the law. Immigrants, whose prosecution is compared with that of the second world war Jews (Wilmer 2018, 79), often provide autobiographical material to authenticate the case and to add persuasive veracity to the argument. In Yael Ronen *Common Ground* (Maxim Gorki Theatre 2015) and in Milo Rau's *Empire* (International Institute for Political Murder 2016), a significant part of the message comes directly from authentic stories of people affected by conflicts and injustice. In the former work, which tells the story of the war in Yugoslavia, the cast consisted of actors from the Balkan countries living in Berlin (Wilmer 2018, 82). While working on the play, they made a trip to visit places which suffered in the conflict. Notes and diary entries recording the experiences of this field trip provided material for the play which thus exposed personal and sensitive responses to ethnic cleansing and violence. Similarly, the latter work relied on personal stories of refugee actors from Greece, Syria or Kurdistan to compose a work telling stories of their experience of conflict and migration to Germany (Wilmer 2018, 83). These documentary plays offer stories of amateur refugee actors as well as employ professional actors to treat and verbalise testimonies of asylum seekers. As Wilmer stresses, such presentations not only preserve "raw

emotional material" which could otherwise loose its freshness under layers of theatricality and professional artifice, but also they "create a greater sense of urgency amongst the audience" (2018, 86). Thus theatre runs a greater chance to turn into a "public forum for discussion" (Wilmer 2018, 84).

Wilmer raises an important issue, by pointing to the fact that with documentary theatre mechanisms of interpretation or even manipulation are particularly exposed. On the one hand, then, documentary theatre maintains its exceptional potential to accuse "Europe of systematic human rights violation in connection with immigration policy" (Wilmer 2018, 91), on the other hand however, Wilmer claims that it is changing a public perception of refugee actors into "celebrity status" (2018, 93) which clearly undermines their reliability as tellers of their own story. I am not entirely convinced of this last argument, since it seems that the authentic, verbatim message of many of the original stories does not yield its credibility with such ease. However, the point about manipulation is worth following further. Wilmer quotes Marvin Carlson who speaks about real celebrities in the acting world, calling them "conscious constructs" of theatre producers and the media (2018, 93). Wilmer tries to consider whether the same process of "constructing" an image of refugees does not turn them into "commodities" of sorts (2018, 94). One could wonder that if indeed such theatrical images of refugees are "conscious contrasts" produced by those who facilitate tragic and painful stories to render them to the general public as, say, more attractive or appealing, then of course it would be extremely interesting to investigate how these "constructs" are composed, and why.

In truth, those who defend refugees and give them voice not only risk turning them into "commodities", as Wilmer suggests, but primarily follow an intellectual construct as well. Both sides of the debate operate with a conscious intention to compose and communicate a concocted stereotype of a figure whose real identity always remains unknown, since it never frees itself from well-defined political uses which prompted the very process of its inception. Both right-wing parties and democratic, liberal artists forward a contrasting notion of the migrating other with exactly the same paradoxical intention of changing the existing political system. Although the former group struggles to make it more authoritarian, the latter more democratic, all those involved desperately need a figure, an emblem or a symbol that in the manner of a ritual scapegoat will charge large groups of followers with either negative or positive energies to change the status quo.

Wilmer also analyses a host of productions which are grouped under the labels of "cross-identification" (chapter 6) and "subversive over-identification" (chapter 7). In both cases, the intention is to interrogate the audience's conventional and stereotypical notions both about refugees and about European identity and social justice. Plays in question present characters who need to confront and ultimately identify with what is normatively perceived as other or foreign. By presenting encounters between genders, nationalities, religions and ethnicities, performances and plays by such artists as Yael Ronen, Caryl Churchill, and Robert Schneider create "dissensus", the concept which Wilmer borrows from Jacques Rancière, leading to "disrupting normative expectations" (2018, 122). Such cross-identifications between characters who are stereotypically defined as occupying warring or conflicting political and religious cultures may in Wilmer's opinion unsettle "ideological assumptions", and what is more important they may give the spectator an "opportunity for self-reflection" (2018, 122). As Wilmer further suggests, again referring to Rancière, the stakes of the game are to create a new type of citizen who is a "conscious agent in the transformation of the world" (2018, 122). In this perhaps slightly too utopian and idealised wish one can recognise quite a conventional function of critical art whose main objective is simply to interrogate set notions or conventions and to defamiliarise them by offering an unexpected, provocative perspective of reading. Similarly, the notion of "subversive identification" facilitates a mechanism of distancing from what is seen as a commonly accepted norm. By asking actors and subsequently audiences to view and follow nationalist ideology and symbols, by reusing "fascist, communist, Christian, pop iconography" (Wilmer 2018, 140), Christoph Schlingensief or Janez Janša of Neue Slowenische Kunst not only expose the ongoing practice of commodification of these notions, but primarily – as Wilmer claims – they interrogate destructive and dangerous "practices of nation-states" which "jeopardise the migrant and the stateless" (2018, 139). In all of these performative projects the normal or conventional practices are enacted with a particular difference in which the critical potential of theatricality comes to the fore. Wilmer persuasively explains how in these productions the norm turns into anti-norm in a process in which European identity and Eurocentric ideology undergo a deconstructive reformulation to expose their injustice.

It is worth revealing the general strategy of narrating and conceptualising the refugee crisis in contemporary theatre. Apart from practical issues of human suffering which the plays naturally raise, the performances investigate what happens at the interfaces of cultural identities, what energy is produced by encounters between individuals whose social and cultural conditions of life reflect a deep injustice of the system. Such cross-sections of cultures and identities were explored by Yael Ronen in *Third Generation: Work in Progress*, a project carried out by Berlin's Schaubűhne and Tel Aviv's Habima Theatre together with Palestinian actors who had sought asylum in Germany (Wilmer 2018, 122). The idea of the encounter between diversified participants was to experiment "with contrasting national identities, ideologies and personal memory" (Wilmer 2018, 122). As Wilmer stresses, the confrontation between citizens, who maintained a safe status of legal residents, and stateless refugees was only one aspect of this collaboration, since the project produced also plays which did not concern issues of migration directly but simply employed performers from different countries. Similarly, an "Exile Ensemble" assembled by Yael Ronen in the Maxim Gorki Theatre comprised actors from seven countries and was integrated into Gorki's regular activities, staging among other works by Sebastian Nűbling (2018, 125). Theatre turns here into an experimental space of observation of "multiple nationalities" forced to confront each other in a situation which maintains a potential to translate itself into a disruption or clash which Wilmer keeps referring to as Rancière's dissensus.

Christoph Schlingensief provided a particularly forceful example of what Wilmer terms "subversive identification" with his *Please Love Austria* project (2000). In an attempt to diagnose Austrian attitudes to migration, he placed a number of asylum seekers in a container located next to the Viennese opera house. Members of the public, who could watch the residents of the container through CCTV cameras, were asked to vote on individual contestants to leave the country and return home (Wilmer 2018, 150). Schlingensief used flags of the far-right party FPŐ as decoration at the top of the container. It is one of many instances in which artists consciously, in Wilmer's words, engage in practices of "renaming and citation" through which they "undermine the 'signature' of right-wing politics" (2018, 157). As such, plays analysed by Wilmer expose the "power of the state" in shaping national identity, and thus they "raise moral issues" about the condition of modern European societies (2018, 156). Such performative projects, which in fact should be located somewhere between art and activism, can be defined as based on dissensus that in this case means bringing together oddness or otherness and common-sense (Wilmer 2018, 158). It is assumed that by this mocking appropriation of symbols and emblems, as well as ideology of right-wing politics nationalist ideology may simply lose its power (Wilmer 2018, 158). Ultimately, as Wilmer suggests referring to Rancière again, subversive identification helps move across cultural and identity hierarchies and opens a prospect of creating "new subjects" which can penetrate a common "field of perception" (2018, 158).

Wilmer's book contains an inherent split, since part of its core analysis is constituted by productions directly concerned with the current refugee crisis, and part with more general issues of state and its constitutive values. This other part offers largely a historical analysis of the Fluxus movement, of Théâtre de Soleil's theatrical nomadism (chapter 8) and – placed in the book's opening chapter – of post-war adaptations of ancient tragedy. All of these artistic projects and endeavours have one common goal; they are intellectually critical of the concept of the state and more importantly and rightly, hostile towards the idea of a nation-state. Once the anti-institutional and anti-systemic intention of the book becomes clear, it should not surprise the reader to see that Wilmer devotes yet another, separate chapter to the analysis of unfair and tragic policies applied by the Irish state in Magdalen's laundries; that is the church institutions responsible for incarcerating and exploiting mothers whose children were born out of wedlock (chapter 5). Although the compositional logic of the analysis is clear, and it is to present systematic criticism of state and its institutions across the second half of the twentieth century capped with the current refugee tragedy, one is tempted to question the arbitrariness of comparing the plight of Irish single mothers with that of Syrian refugees and Fluxus artists. True, in some way they have all been either victims of the system or critics of it; yet, do they really share the same level of discontent and suffering only because their real or imagined enemy happens to be this or that European state. What is more, apart from presenting definitely useful efforts of artists in raising social awareness of refugee crisis and in mobilising social capital to provoke acts of caring hospitality, the intellectual solution that Wilmer offers to potentially deal with the crisis does not go beyond anti-state clichés of contemporary philosophers and political thinkers. The concept

frequently referred to in this context is "nomadism" together with all its derivatives such as "transnational perspective", "nomadic citizenship" or "deterritorialization of citizenship" as remedies to the increasing omnipresence and currency of the nation-state. It is interesting to know how asylum seekers, or – for that matter – Irish single mothers, would be helped by practising any of these nomadic identities. In this context "nomadism' sounds rather escapist and idealistic.

Analysing plays and films concerned with Irish "unwanted mothers", Wilmer disputes the concept of "ideology of the state" which he sees as cultivating "sacrosanct national identity" (2018, 97). The Irish state in collaboration with the Church strove to render single mothers invisible in the landscape of the predominantly catholic country. Wilmer suggests that these women, exploited in an economic way and practically imprisoned in clandestine religious institutions, could be seen as examples of Agamben's "bare life" – the concept of "life with no ethical value" which the Italian philosopher created in *Homo Sacer* (2018, 104). The idea connecting the deplorable practices of the Catholic Church in Ireland with the discussion about "statelessness" suggests that the women were "denied the usual rights of citizens" and were forced to exist in a "liminal status" similar to that of asylum seekers. However, it is plain clear that the opposite was the case: Irish "unwanted mothers" were claimed by the state, while refugees are rejected. It is the overprotective incarceration of citizens whom the state deems its own possession, if not property, that stands behind the need to erase them from social view.

Plays and films telling the sad story of Irish mothers, for instance *Eclipsed* (1994), a play by Patricia Burke Brogan, as well as Peter Mullan's film *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002) and Stephen Frears's *Philomena* (2013) reveal what Wilmer calls "biopolitical structure" (2018, 98) which can clearly be attributed to Irish catholic state. There is no doubt that Wilmer correctly accuses modern political state of violence. He is right to suggest that at a time of trial the political state has a dangerous tendency to assume a defensive strategy of incarceration and elimination, of control and cleansing, of strictly defining its borders. However, one should perhaps be aware of the distinction between state-pure (for lack of a better name), and a nation-state; the former being a neutral set of common rules necessary to pay taxes, buy cars and send children to school, the latter verging on a dangerous path of authoritarian control over people's identities and private lifestyles. The former should be defended, the latter prevented.

The inherent criticism levelled against the very idea of state is particularly present when Wilmer engages in his analysis of the Fluxus movement and Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre de Soleil. The general assumption of this section of his analysis is that the state, at least in its modern, post-war incarnation, carries inherent flaws and should be rejected at best, or simply decomposed. Artistic activities of Fluxus as well as Théâtre de Soleil reflected what Deleuze and Guattari called "nomadic artists" and in Wilmer's view realised the idea of "transnationalism" (2018, 165). Wilmer nominates Joseph Beuys as an example of artist who "opposed the state apparatus" (2018, 169), and presents him as a model for "transnational perspective" in art (2018, 173). As far as such a philosophy of art helps challenge "nationalist discourses" or propose "cosmopolitan approach to society", its work for social benefit is obvious and must not need any defence, since it does its job within a stable limits of the society. Yet, once we move on with a more radical approach, opting for "nomad citizenship" (Wilmer 2018, 194) with the purpose to "deprive the State of its claim to any master-allegiance", we end up with what Wilmer seems to enjoy acknowledging, that is "deterritorialization of hierarchy in social groups that self-organize immanently instead of submitting to a transcendent instance of command such as State rule" (Eugene Holland, qtd. in Wilmer 2018, 184). The only current example of "immanent self-organization" rejecting the command of State rule that comes to my mind now is blatant anti-semitisem of the yellow-vests movement.

The explicit criticism of the state, which comes across as particularly vocal in reference to the current condition of nation-states within the EU, Wilmer also presents against a wider spectrum of historical material, reaching back into ancient drama and analysing its contemporary adaptations (chapter 2). In general, he follows the idea of "hospitality" back to such plays as *Oedipus at Colonus* and *The Supplicants* in which the theme of admitting strangers features as an important element of the plot (Wilmer 2018, 11). Wilmer points that contemporary philosophy often revisited the theme of hospitality with Levinas, Derrida and Butler as most important thinkers tackling modern aspects of morality in social and political contexts. Primarily, however, he focuses on Antigone as a figure most prominently present as modern rebel against

the state. In Jean Anouilh's version of the myth (*Antigone*, 1944), as well as in Janusz Głowacki's (*Antigone in New York*, 1983), or in Seamus Heaney's adaptation *The Burial at Thebes* (2004) she stands for the fate of the "dispossessed" (Wilmer 2018, 13) and for the need of "defending human rights in defiance of the oppressive and arbitrary authority" (Wilmer 2018, 15). Her "liminal, vulnerable and precarious" position (Wilmer 2018, 14) aims at exposing the exception to law which modern states practice to exclude individuals from the rule of law and in "an effort to produce a secondary judicial system" (Judith Butler qtd in Wilmer 2018, 24).

However, the question to be asked here is whether this criticism should really concern the state or the people. One of the most significant examples of theatre performance which Wilmer cites in this context is Elfriede Jelinek's *The Charges* (loosely based on Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*). The story originated in a tragic plight of a group of refugees who were stationed in a Viennese church awaiting deportation or imprisonment. Jelinek wrote a long, monologue play, imagining what their pleas for help and justice might sound like. In a number of German productions directors employed refugees along with professional actors to perform the story and to attract the authorities' attention to the problem (Wilmer 2018, 32). Ultimately, the play and its multiple stagings across Germany was supposed to expose "power structure" and "national ideologies" in a contemporary society, and by implication, to activate audiences into action beyond simple feeling of pity (Wilmer 2018, 40). Looking into Jelinek's text, however, clearly proves that she primarily interrogates private attitudes, not national or state policies, which turn individual people into hostile enemies of integration or hospitality. It is private notions of religious or political prejudice which move individuals towards denying the rights of others. Jelinek reconstructs fear-driven thinking of contemporary Europeans as founded on a selfish need for comfort and on elemental intolerance which are explicated through ungrounded accusations addressed to the migrants: "you deserve blankets, water and food, what will you think you deserve tomorrow? Our wives, our children, our jobs, our homes?" (Jelinek 2014, 7). The state does not have anything to do with the fact that people's discriminatory mindset flourishes on a combination of selfishness and fear. As Ivan Krastev stresses in his inspiring study of the crisis of the philosophy of common Europe, this mindset offers new political leaders a perfect fuel for driving their destructive policies: "the new populism is perfectly suited to societies where citizens are consumers above all else and view their leaders as waiters who are expected to move quickly in fulfilling their wishes" (2017, 35). In this sense, it is the refugees who carry the potential of renewal, again as Jelinek imagines them declare: "We, the dead, the relatives of the dead, who lived with the dead, we want to fill your values with life, so at least they can live" (Jelinek 2014, 18). Ivan Krastev also sees the refugees as a revolutionary force capable of reforming the European societies: "migration is the new revolution" (2017, 30). These opinions echo in other analyses of politics and society at the time of refugee crisis. Presented rather as a crisis of "solidarity", the current dilemma indicates a need to develop "horizontalism" and "direct action tactics" (Augustin and Jørgensen 2019, 30), and thus lead to the "formation of transformative political subjectivities" (Augustin and Jørgensen 2019, 30). Such "new subjects" may be more "inventive" in terms of challenging traditional social relations and in producing "new alternatives and imaginaries" (Augustin and Jørgensen 2019, 34). The assumption, therefore, is that once individual thinking has been redefined, to which Wilmer refers in other contexts of his analysis, social and political systems follow. The crisis concerns the society not the state.

Wilmer's book concludes with a chapter on German theatre institutions engaged in raising public awareness of the plight of immigrants in Europe (chapter 9). Wilmer covers partly the activities of theatres which have already been discussed earlier in the book, for instance Maxim Gorki theatre and its "exile ensemble" (2018, 196), and throws into the mix institutions located outside of the capital, in Dresden or Mülheim and Munich. In general, theatrical activities which form significant parts of these institutions' programmes come as a result of the refugee crisis which peaked in 2014 and 2015. Such "post-immigrant theatre" (Wilmer 2018, 190) not only aims at supporting refugees in their recognition among members of the German public, but also actively struggles for their "empowerment" in the society (Wilmer 2018, 196). An additional intention of some of the artists was, in Wilmer's opinion, to "successfully escape from the arrogant gesture of a privileged institution" (2018, 196) by employing refugee actors and allowing migrant stories to sound in their authentic originality. Wilmer's book amply proves the vibrancy and dedication of German theatre to engage with the issue of refugee crisis and more importantly with migrant's daily

life in a foster society. His book testifies to the flexibility of part of the society who understand that their values and priorities are not given once and for all, but remain a product of sensitive and moral negotiation in circumstances which require openness and tolerance at a time of rising nationalism and right-wing ideologies. With its other, more political and philosophical thesis Wilmer's book attempts to offer quite a profound criticism of the concept of modern state, suggesting that an alternative to its authoritarian rule lies in some non-national, floating identity of nomadic subjects. Although the fear of modern state seems to be justified with such countries as Poland, Hungary, or Italy slowly sinking into a deadly embrace of nationalist populism, the solution sounds naively idealistic and disarmingly impractical.

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