

Performance and Migration Group: meeting on October 6, 2026

Dear members of the Working Group,

We would like to invite you to the first regular online meeting of our WG to take place on **Tuesday, October 6, 2026, 10 am (EST). Here is our Zoom link:**

Topic: WG Performance and Migration. Regular online meeting

Time: Oct 6, 2026 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://uottawa-ca.zoom.us/j/91074321881?pwd=iGjuvOTARMfYWNjinteMRmq8Jw71mI.1>

This meeting will feature four presenters:

1. Zeliha Kuruducu (Turkey)
2. Shabnam Sukhdev (Canada)
3. Anna Bendrat (Poland)
- 4. Dwaipayan Chowdhury (Germany)**

You can find their abstracts below.

I will be asking each presenter to keep their talks to 15 minutes so we can have a productive discussion.

Do not hesitate to send questions or inquiries in advance.

Cordially, Yana Meerzon

ABSTRACTS

From Living Archive to Sovereign Amnesia: Metaphors of Memory in Epic and Contemporary Drama

By Zeliha Kuruducu

This paper traces the historical shift of memory from the Homeric tradition as a living archive to contemporary drama as sovereign amnesia. In Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, memory emerges as a communal and performative practice, sustained through song, monumentality, and narrative transmission, which function as vehicles of cultural continuity. Cultural memory is articulated through metaphors in various forms—songs, monuments, storytelling, and the figure of Mnemosyne—through which memory mediates both cultural and political identity, as ethical action is inscribed within a living communal archive. By contrast, in contemporary drama, the theatre becomes a stage that presents a fragmented memoryscape in which collective continuity collapses. Epic memory as a living archive becomes of sovereign amnesia; rather than providing narrative stability and transmission, memory becomes regulated and suspended within a biopolitical paradigm, turning into a site where political power reshapes visibility and historical narration. In Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*, war is separated from collective historical memory; narrative permanency dislocates, and language itself becomes fragmented and unstable. Thus, ethical visibility in epic shifts into ethical obscurity in contemporary drama. Action, once publicly inscribed and memorialized, becomes uncertain, fragile, and temporally unstable. Through a comparative

approach, this paper reconsiders memory as both heritage and contested sites, tracing a powerful shift from collective transmission to biopolitical amnesia.

Keywords: Cultural Memory; Epic and Contemporary Drama; Sovereignty; Heritage; Metaphor

BIO: Dr. Zeliha Kuruducu is a Lecturer at Karabük University, Türkiye. Her research interests include contemporary British drama, literary theory, adaptation studies, biopolitics, ethics, political subjectivity, and classical literature. She has published journal articles and book chapters in the fields of drama, literary theory, adaptation, and classical reception, and has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences. Her academic activities included invited lectures, funded research projects, editorial work, and peer review. Dr. Kuruducu actively contributes to international research networks as a Working Group Member of COST Action CA24137 – MultiLiLiTrans (Multilingual Literature as a Transnational Phenomenon), a member of the BAFTSS Adaptation Special Interest Group, and a participant in the IFTR Working Groups Translation, Adaptation and Dramaturgy and Performance, Migration, and Nationalism.

Shabnam Sukhdev

When Home Becomes a Gesture: Hybrid Mobilities, Embodied Memory, and Migrant Belonging

Through an arts-based autoethnographic inquiry, this paper returns to the period when my ninety-year-old mother moved from India to live with me in Canada. Although her memory remained strong, the displacement from her familiar surroundings, relationships, and everyday rhythms profoundly unsettled her sense of orientation. Her subsequent cognitive decline cannot be separated from this rupture. Situated within the intimate space of intergenerational caregiving, I ask: what happens when migration displaces not memory itself, but the sensory, spatial, and relational structures through which memory becomes livable?

Working with embodied recollection, family photographs and recordings, food, music, dance, language, and performative reconstruction, I examine how familiar practices helped my mother feel situated within an unfamiliar environment. These encounters did not restore forgotten memories; rather, they reconnected memory to the embodied rhythms and relationships that had once sustained her. I approach hybridity not as the seamless blending of two cultures, but as an unsettled relational condition: my mother was physically present in Canada while affectively and sensorially oriented toward a life elsewhere. Her aging migrant body became a porous site where India and Canada, continuity and rupture, mobility and rootedness, archive and embodied repertoire encountered one another.

Rather than suggesting that migrants carry an intact home within themselves, I argue that home becomes inhabitable through relational acts of sensory recognition, repetition, and care. Arts-based autoethnography enables me to investigate how displacement is experienced through the body while acknowledging my implicated position as daughter, caregiver, migrant, and artist.

The paper proposes embodied home-making as a form of hybrid mobility through which belonging emerges not as permanent settlement, but through relational moments of becoming situated again.

Keywords: embodied memory; situatedness; migrant belonging; displacement; relationality; affect; autoethnography

BIO: Shabnam Sukhdev is a multimedia artist, filmmaker, and PhD researcher in Theatre and Performance Studies at York University's School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design. Her

SSHRC-funded research-creation project explores migration, memory, and belonging within South Asian diasporic contexts.

Working across performance, moving image, digital storytelling, and autoethnography, Shabnam examines how mobility is remembered and embodied across generations. Her practice explores how bodies, images, objects, gestures, and digital technologies can carry diasporic memory and reshape our relationships to home.

Her Connected Minds project brings AI into participatory performance, while engaging feminist, decolonial, and disability-informed approaches to migration, memory, and relationality.

Anna Bendrat, John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin, Poland

Calling the Displaced: Forefathers as a Sonic Performance of Historical Exile and Archival Return

This paper analyses *Dziady* (Forefathers), a contemporary audio-theatre performance by Michał “Nihil” Kuźniak (Furia black metal group) and Dominik Gac, based on Adam Mickiewicz’s canonical drama and on archival field recordings produced during Gardzienice Theatre expeditions to rural Eastern Poland between 1977 and 1981. Drawing on voices of villagers recalling wars, partitions, deportations, forced labour, and vanished rural worlds, *Dziady* constructs a performative ritual of historical exile, understood not as an exceptional rupture, but rather a constitutive condition of Polish modernity. Reworking the Slavic rite of *dziady* – a communal practice of calling and listening to the dead – the performance reactivates displacement as an unresolved historical presence, in which the uprooted return as fragmentary, spectral voices rather than coherent subjects of testimony.

Presented live, the work situates audiences in a collective listening environment: a two-hour sound composition unfolds before an almost empty stage, marked only by a single vacant chair and ritualised lighting. This scenographic restraint foregrounds absence and suspension, transforming listening into a shared, quasi-transcendental practice. I argue that *Dziady* does not represent migration, but performs displacement through sound, articulating an ethics of listening to those historically uprooted yet rarely recognised as migrants.

Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s “On the Concept of History,” the paper reads *Dziady* as a performative constellation in which displaced pasts interrupt linear historiography, appearing as ruins that demand attention rather than reconciliation. Methodologically, the project is approached as a sonic counter-archive and a practice of archival return, whose ritual dramaturgy, modelled on Gardzienice’s expeditionary structures, brings past and present into a charged encounter.

By shifting theatre from visual representation to collective listening, *Dziady* demonstrates what performance can do in migration contexts: not restore lost homes, but momentarily reassemble communities around absence, memory, and shared resonance.

Keywords: performance and migration, historical displacement, sonic dramaturgy, archival return, ritual and listening

Bio: Anna Bendrat, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of American Literature and Culture at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. Her research interests lie at the intersection of contemporary American drama, migration studies, theatre and performance studies, and rhetoric. She examines literary and performative representations of migration, displacement, identity, cultural memory, and transnational belonging. Her recent research focuses on the concept of “dramaturgies of migration”

and the ways in which theatre negotiates migrant experience and identity formation. She is a member of the Performance and Migration Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR) and serves on the editorial board of *Res Rhetorica* journal. In the years 2024-2026 she took part in the EU Erasmus+ project *MigraMedia* which examined the representations of migration in various media outlets and created educational tools such as an international MOOC course for university students and "Migration keywords".

Rehearsing Resilience: Zehra Doğan's Performances of Memory and Counterforce

Dwaipayan Chowdhury

This paper examines two video performances by Kurdish artist Zehra Doğan—*Unbreakable, I will break you anyway* (2021) and *Kuvvet – Kuvvet | Force Counterforce* (2021)—as site-specific acts of rehearsal within a landscape of inherited violence. Doğan, a journalist and artist forced into exile in Germany after imprisonment in Turkey, embodies a condition of displacement that structures her Kurdish experience across divided borders. Both works were filmed at the Amna Suraka Museum in Sulaymaniyah, a former torture center under Saddam Hussein's regime and a memorial to the Anfal genocide. In this charged site, Doğan positions her body against an armored vehicle—a recurring instrument of state terror—probing the fragile resilience of small gestures in the face of overwhelming force. In *Unbreakable*, she revisits a childhood memory of throwing stones at Turkish military vehicles and her mother's warning that such acts were futile; the performance becomes a rehearsal of that unresolved dialogue, asking what forms of resistance remain when direct confrontation is foreclosed. *Force Counterforce* extends this inquiry through rhythmic, incantatory action that tests the limits of embodied persistence. Together, these works articulate a dramaturgy of migration—not as voluntary movement but as an inherited condition shaped by neocolonial borders and the artist's own trajectory of exile. I argue that Doğan's practice models a rehearsal for futures in which memory, resistance, and survival converge in the performing body.

Keywords: memory, counterforce, Zehra Doğan, the Anfal genocide

BIO: Dwaipayan Chowdhury received his PhD from the "International Research Center – Interweaving Performance Cultures" at Freie Universität Berlin (2023). Trained in communication, literature, and theater and performance studies, he has studied in Berlin, Amsterdam, New Delhi, and Kolkata. His work appears in *Methuen Handbook of European Amateur Theater* (forthcoming), *Performance Research* (forthcoming), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Stage Directors*, *The Brecht Yearbook*, and *Asian Theatre Journal*, among others. His research and educational practice focus on theater, migration, and the cultural and performative dynamics of the far-right. He develops workshops, seminars, and research-based projects with civil-society organisations (e.V.) in Berlin-Brandenburg and is presently engaged in German Voluntary Service at the archive at Federation of German Amateur Theatres (BDAT e.V.), Berlin.