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Burlyuk, O., & Rahbari, L. (Eds.). (2023). *Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers.

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Burlyuk, O., and L. Rahbari. (2023) *Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers.

Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe dives into six main themes that correspond to different aspects of the migrant academic experience. Under each theme, the editors collected autoethnographic accounts of different scholars working in various Western academic institutions. The first theme, '(Non)Belonging,' centers around the issues of othering, the post-colonial predicament of precarity and enforced mobility, and the process of (de)constructing and (un)learning who and what an academic should be. The second one, '(In)visible Inclusion and Exclusion,' discusses the painful experience of what Dragana Stojmenovska describes as "knowing your place" (2023, p. 51) and navigating the manifestation of precarity and exclusion within oneself.

The third theme, 'Borders, Mobility, and Academic 'Nomadism',' deals with mobility as an inevitable aspect of an academic career and its effect on individual experience and identity in the context of the increasing internationalization of academia. 'Complexities of Privilege and Precarity,' are foregrounded as the fourth theme. It does not represent privilege and precarity as a dichotomy, nor as a linear spectrum, but rather as a complex web of comparatives and endless analytical dimensions. 'Gendered Precarity and Sexualization,' adds an extra layer to that precarity as the fifth theme. It centers around the female experience and the gendered asymmetry of opportunities, being seen primarily as sexed bodies as well as the hardships surrounding getting help and just treatment. The final theme, 'Embodied Differences and (Non)Whiteness,' approaches whiteness as an imperialist state of mind sustained by infantilization, dismissal, structural discrimination, and a plethora of other (micro)aggressions that constitute the lived reality of non-white bodies within the academy.

The volume itself carries meaning as a collective act of vulnerability beyond the content of each intricate personal story. As a practice of connecting the researcher's lived experiences, autobiographical memory, and sense-of-self-making to wider societal and theoretical debates, autoethnography has become an increasingly relevant method for critical self-reflection in academic writing. Radically fostering subjectivity, autoethnographic reflection liberates the writing process from academic conventions, allowing aspects of personal expression such as creativity, emotion, and opinion to guide the text. Having encountered academic texts and situations which frame such methodologies as marginal, we appreciate the authors' uncompromising emphasis on the powerful impact of autoethnography. Underlining the notion that the personal is political, the editors write:

While we acknowledge the structural nature of inequalities [...], we believe that individual narratives that connect the elements of history, context, and life stories have the potential to give us an in-depth understanding of precarity and resilience (Burlyuk and Rahbari, 2023, p. xv).

Vulnerable autoethnography therefore does not allow the reader or the writer to overlook the sensibilities of the academic, researching self, it spotlights them. Enlivening guiding pillars such as positionality and active reflexivity and demonstrating that the body does not forget.

The presence of discrimination within Western academia, a space that social scientists diligently seek to expose and counteract empirically, is clearly evident in the volume. Many of the featured authors mention the excitement they experienced upon leaving their homelands for what they describe as 'academic career opportunities' (Burlyuk, Chapter 17, pp. 163-180; Tănăsescu, Chapter 3, pp. 21-30; Namatande-Sakwa, Chapter 18, pp. 183-189). However, migration can be a humbling process - sometimes it can feel as if until the end of our lives, we will be forced to keep our heads down and helplessly watch the safety mechanisms we have built collapse in front of us. In Chapter 15, Aslı Vatansever (2023) characterizes the migrant experience as 'survival in silence' (p. 135). Especially for those

who hold precarious passports, a good cry is a rare privilege (Asgarilaleh, 2023, pp. 95-98) and the migrant quotidian leaves little time or mental resources to mourn phases of life that have forever been lost. This is even more difficult in an environment devoid of empathy (Asgarilaleh, 2023, p. 100), sustained by microaggressions towards ‘the Other’ (Rahbari, 2023, p. 221) and plagued by frequent abuses of power (Namatande-Sakwa, 2023, p. 183).

Additionally, the volume delves into the – often neglected – experiences of scholars at risk, displaced scholars, and scholars in exile, whose precarious situations and potential involuntary migration are products of the systems to which they are subjected. (Axyonova, 2023, pp. 5-7; Vatansever, 2023, pp. 145-154). Understanding that the ‘better’ part of Europe, which is promised in romanticized tropes migration, is not as glorious as one had imagined can be one of the most difficult moments in migrants’ lives, as Mihnea Tănăsescu points out (2023, pp. 21-30). It marks the beginning of the never-ending process of *unlearning* planted expectations, biases, habits, and convictions to conform with the Western neoliberal order of life. The contributors’ description gradually morphs into what Sara Ahmed calls ‘melancholic migrants’ (Ahmed, 2010, p. 121).¹ Many authors share a sense of being torn between the simultaneous comfort and discomfort of a life of migration and multiculturalism, immersed in neoliberal Western societies.

That academic life may be one of alienation and isolation, is also something we read in this book. In Chapter 7 (pp. 61-68), an anonymous contributor writes about mental health and points towards the struggle of scholars to make a distinction between what is in and outside of work, because we notoriously apply academic critical thinking in our private lives and use our own experiences to prompt findings in our professional ones. The constant cycle of (self-)scrutiny leads to an awareness of the helplessness embedded in the systems that we do not merely study but also live under. This is perhaps the reason why this book is so powerful - reading the accounts of fellow academics gives the reader a safe and accountable space to break down, validate their feelings, and piece themselves back together with the help and guidance of a caring narrator. In deep appreciation of this, we would like to thank the editors and the authors for sharing parts of themselves in this book and showing us the unmatched capacity of autoethnography.

As EU students enrolled in a Western university, we do not wish to utilize the collected accounts to satisfy our own sense of altruism or to claim someone else’s pain. We acknowledge that our ability to find comfort in some of these writings marks a high level of privilege that we both undeniably enjoy. That being said, we were baffled by how relatable certain passages felt to us. For Zuzanna, a young Polish woman, especially Olga Burlyuk’s account in Chapter 17 (pp. 163-180) validated all these feelings that she has been struggling to verbalize for years; Luisa, who grew up in Germany, resonated with the anonymous contributors’ reflections (Chapter 7, pp. 61-68) on navigating the connectedness of social research to the depths of personal emotional states. This is precisely where the value of storytelling lies - we can listen to, compare, and learn from other people’s experiences and thus feel a little bit less alone in this overwhelmingly high-paced world.

Zuzanna Ściborska and Luisa Voss

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¹ Ahmed, S. (2010). *The promise of happiness*. NC: Duke University Press.

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