

## UNHEIMAT/*Der Prozess*

*Unheimat* is a word I started thinking of after a conversation with a friend. She started to talk about the feeling of estrangement that comes when being far away from our homeland long enough, so you actually live in this not-so-temporary new place. She was looking for a word for something she is feeling abroad and thought of the following: *uncanny* land. She needed to name the place she is going to be living in for the next six months and how her general lack of belonging was giving her a feeling of emptiness. I have always thought that whenever one would spend more than three weeks elsewhere from home, one is officially not travelling nor on vacations, but in a place where life happens. *#bleiben*

I told her that uncanny (*unheimlich*) has always been sort of an unprecise translation of a complicated German word and an even sketchier psychological term coined by Freud. She acknowledged and I winked at her since I love the wordplay.

*Unheimat* is a word I came up with by sticking together the negative prefix «*un*» to the word «*Heimat*», taking into consideration that *unheimlich* also has «*Heim*» as an integral part of its overall meaning. *Unheimat* refers to the feeling of being estranged at/from/in our home, new or old. One is pushed away from feeling at home in our own home: one can be estranged of our **Heim** just by being there or/and making the effort to be and feel there.

Displacement comes as no surprise for those of us that have been moved by life to places in which we do not belong completely, especially if life forces us to make a living in them.

So, what is home? Home is (as my therapist told me) where the wound grows and builds a safety to make us feel comfortable in our wounded womb, the womb, from which we come from and to which we spend our life travelling back to. Home is – by every means – the combination of the womb and the wound that expels us from it, home is a place which we constantly try to acknowledge and sometimes repair. *#Heim*

*Unheimat* is not an estrangement from home, but the lack of its presence in the place our house is located right now.

In the process of migration, we search and collect the pieces of a place that is being built elsewhere: in an undisclosed land, in a present tense we don't know, nor really care about, since factually it reminds us that we are not going home at the end of the day. A land that unknowingly affects and shapes our days in unfathomable ways.

*#sammeln*

This process of estranging our home and the evidence that it will never be **our** Home, this strength that moves us to build and imagining an un-present **Heim** stripped of its present presence, has the ability to transform us and renders us travelers in time and space: coming from a historically stiff and alien past we are pushed towards a future whose material evidence is bound to a present in **another** land. *#Ausländer*

Migrants are the only (painfully) free humans, as we are able to travel in time, even though space is generally bordered for us as an un-cohesive group of people.

I have been in Europe since 2017 and have spent most of that time travelling because I used to make a living as a tattoo artist, but since I have moved to Switzerland last year, the feeling of not belonging anywhere has grown exponentially, even if as a kid I moved a lot coming from a diplomat household. I came to think that there is no home for me and that home is indeed the place where my displacement wound would bleed me, but as a part of the ever growing Latin-American diaspora, I have also started to think that we assume a present tense *unheimat* wherever we are (dis)placed: going to the ~~new world~~ we are bound *to be* an integral part of an alien history and of the power architecture that was placed within the process of colonization of the ~~old world~~.

«Fue entonces que creyó que la promesa que le había sido hecha era su misión.

Aunque no entendiera por qué nos corresponde a nosotros cumplir una promesa que en realidad no fue hecha».

Clarice Lispector, la manzana en lo oscuro.

While living in Switzerland, two constant questions have always found their way to me, one is «why Switzerland?» and I will save myself the trouble of repeating the answer, because of its layered nature; the other one is «why are you working in a kitchen when it is evidently underneath your capacity?». This second question is at the center of this text, in a way I am writing down the answer to those questions they never stop asking.

*#kodwoeshun*

I work in gastro, which allowed me to make a living that surpasses my needs and those of my family back home. I have gotten them the necessary means to thrive and not just to survive. That would answer not only the second question, but also gives a hint for the first one. As a migrant, we always find ourselves with one foot in the place we live and with the other one in the land we left behind. This human bridge makes possible a life that is sometimes exceedingly complicated to clarify to those who don't (have to) participate in it. *#erklären*

By deciding not to make art as a (im)possible living and instead doing a job that is seemingly underneath my capacities as an «artist» I make magic in a faraway land, where having my job would not account for much, less so to making any form of art, besides the art of surviving, since that is the rule for the majority of the people on the other side of the Atlantic. There, instead of making art, we have faith and **F.A.I.T.H.** means: Family Abroad In The Hustle, or like we say in Venezuela: **F.E.**: Familia en el Extranjero.

*#vertrauen*

In this case, as in many others similar to it, this process of *unheimat* becomes a way that propels itself into the future by looking at the past.

Not feeling at home anywhere is the way I participate in igniting processes elsewhere, somewhere.

Anywhere.