

Aleksander Motturi's Triptych

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In this section of PARSE journal issue on Art & Migration we present a triptych by the Swedish writer Aleksander Motturi. In addition to the essay "When you are a writer – notes on the art of fiction", the section contains a translated excerpt from his latest novel *Onåbara*¹ and his essay film *Thaumazein* which is here published for the first time since it premiered at the Gothenburg International Film Festival 29 January 2014, which was followed by a screening at Columbia University where it was presented by professor Gayatri Spivak.²

The three contributions interact and form a complex example of Motturi's work on the theme of art and migration, both as a writer and artistic director of Clandestino Institut, an interdisciplinary network with a focus on music, art and literature from cosmopolitan cultural environments shaped by global migration. His creative writing is intertwined with philosophical essays and artistic interventions in the field of music and culture production in general.

The triptych touches on topics such as the right to narrate, trauma fetishism, and ways of writing that critically transgresses innocent reproduction of difference ideologies that permeates our time. *Thaumazein* can be described as an experimental essay film on Peter Ekwiri, a Sudanese refugee who was deported to Ghana by Swedish migration authorities in the late 1990s, which gave rise to first edition of the Clandestino Festival in 2003. The novel *Onåbara* portrays a Syrian film maker who has just left migration centre to start a new life in Sweden.

Rather than trying to capture voices of traumatic experiences *Thaumazein* and *Onåbara* portrays subjects that are more than afflictive aspects of their experiences. In *Thaumazein* the refugee Peter Ekwiri philosophises over the Paul Gauguin's questions: "Where Do We Come From? What Are? Where Are We Going?" While doing so, his case unfolds by intertwining and rearranging footage from *Fortress Europe*³, part 3, an award-winning documentary from 2001 in which his story of being dumped in wrong country in Africa by Swedish migration authorities first became public.

In the novel *Onåbara*, the case is fictive, apparently informed by waves of refugees from Syria, and the focus is inverted, redirected towards the receiver's desire for "pornography" of violence. The subjective narrator is a refugee, Lateef, who encounters a novelist who he hopes will write his story. At first, the writer seems to be interested in his story, but as he realizes that the story is not on the experience of war and persecution, but on a love affair with an upper-class man in Cairo, he turns his back on Lateef.

In the essay presented at the third Arts & Migration PARSE seminar series, held on 24th of April 2019, Aleksander Motturi has explored the theme of trauma fetishism in relation to the idea of fiction writing as something that

must be rooted in the unknown, rather than something known that needs to be given literary form.

Footnotes

1. Motturi, Aleksander. *Onåbara*. Stockholm. Nordstedts. 2019.
2. <https://cgt.columbia.edu/cgt-events/film-screening-thaumazein/>
3. https://www.oppetarkiv.se/etikett/titel/Fortet_Europa/