TRADE IN STRANGERS: CURIOSITY, TRAVEL AND THE RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANTS

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Abstract: *This article considers the actions of migrant recruiters who organised the movement of people in Europe in the early modern period and thereafter. Recruiters were responsible for the systemisation of migration and their actions resulted in a competition in the European labour market which prompted state-level responses to emigration and immigration, and to people on the move. Europeans encountered opportunities to emigrate through their interactions with recruiters and by reading about life abroad; travel and travel writing brought people face to face with curiosity and wonder. Stories of life abroad were collected, categorised, and brought home and migrant recruiters exploited the growing curiosity about the wider world. Recruiters aided migrants in reaching a decision to leave and an examination of their actions and motivations aids in understanding the origins of large-scale migration in the nineteenth century and after.*

In the wake of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) a burgeoning sense of possibility emerged in many parts of Europe, fuelled by economic expansion, the growth of commodity culture, the erosion of fixed status categories, and the continuing impact of print. A lively commercial culture put things and ideas into circulation in unparalleled numbers, and the resultant ethos of mobility disquieted society. This air of upheaval generated an ethos of mobility during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with migrants travelling to North America or to Russia, England, Ireland, Spain, Denmark, and other countries.[1]

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[1] The phrase "Trade in Strangers" quotes the title of a book by Marianne Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999), which has been of great importance in framing my

Yet in the scholarship on migration, little attention has been paid to the recruiters who tempted migrants and who organised their travel. In later centuries and our own, these people are called human traffickers. The processes of migrant recruitment which took place and which were crucial to populating new communities and new societies has hitherto been overlooked.

This article places emphasis on the actions of the migrant recruiters who solicited and enticed, and subsequently trafficked, migrants and colonists in Europe in the early modern period and thereafter. Seducers, advisers, exhorters, and cajolers, these recruiters were responsible for the systemization of migration, and through their actions, a competition for labour wrought significant changes in the European labour market and catalysed state-sponsored, professionalized control of immigration, in turn irrevocably changing state policy towards migrants. The processes migrant recruiters initiated would have lasting effects on large-scale migration, finding resonance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and beyond.

Migration studies has traditionally focused on the analysis and evaluation of various "push" and "pull" factors, when explaining the causes of particular movements. However, not all major occurrences can be seen as potential stimuli for triggering emigration: labour shortage in one area was often not of itself sufficient to stimulate immigration. A range of diverse factors must be taken into consideration, as the "push-pull" model does not adequately explain European migration before the nineteenth century.[2] Sole reliance on the rubric of push-pull would suggest that all migrants acted freely and independently in choosing their destination of resettlement. This was certainly not the case with regard to seventeenth and eighteenth-century German migration to North America and to central and eastern Europe, since migrants were more frequently than not directed towards a specific territory by a recruiter. Moreover, the recruiter

thinking on this subject. For an overall survey of the topic see Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochen Oltmer, eds., *The Encyclopaedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[2] Georg Fertig, "Does Overpopulation Explain Emigration? The Case of 18th-Century Transatlantic Migration from the Rhine Lands," *John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien, Abteilung für Geschichte, Working Paper No. 84* (1995); Dirk Hoerder, "Segmented Macrosystems and Networking Individuals: The Balancing Functions of Migration Processes," *Migration, Migration History, History. Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, ed. Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999) 73-84.

worked, almost without exception, for the financial reward that accrued to him, and was rarely if ever motivated by philanthropic zeal or charitable commitment.

Accordingly, the actions of human traffickers and intermediaries in the migration business must assume greater significance in the analysis of early-modern human movement.[3] In fact, until the process of moving people became a profitable enterprise, and connections were made between the supply and demand for labour, large-scale migration could not have occurred without the efforts of migrant recruiters. Human traffickers and migrant recruiters are not unique to the history of the early modern period. Private recruiters had long played a part in inspiring people to consider uprooting and leaving their homelands. Migrant recruiters helped would-be migrants to address the political, legal, economic, and ideological conditions in the home region and abroad and by uncovering the roles they played we can gain a more complete picture of the history of migration.

No society is entirely immobile and self-sufficient: every community relies on the reports of travellers when seeking to know more about life beyond the territory with which they are most familiar.[4] Exiles and fugitives, hostages, captives, refugees and travellers; itinerant merchants and craftsmen, pilgrims and mendicants, children fostered in foreign groups to learn languages, messengers, envoys and spies, and others: all helped to expand knowledge of life beyond the familiar.[5] With the possible exception of traders and those learning languages with the express intention of becoming an interpreter, travel could rarely if ever be legitimized as a goal in itself. Rarer still was travel legitimized as an express commission for exploration. The primary concern of every member of society was to secure sustenance and covering; travel was rarely sought out and most religious authorities stressed that divinely-ordained contentment lay in staying where one was: "Dwell in the land and you shall be fed" (Psalms 37:3) and "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8) were much-repeated biblical quotations. When women and men did go beyond the horizon of their group, however, they acquired knowledge inaccessible to their peers.

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[3]   For more on the idea of the intermediary in early modern history, see Andreas Höfele and Werner von Koppenfels, eds., *Renaissance Go-betweens: Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

[4]   Wilhelm Mühlmann, "Ethnologie als soziologische Theorie der interethnischen Systeme," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 8 (1956): 186-205.

[5]   Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity* (Chur: Harwood, 1995) 10-11.

In early modern Europe, travel could threaten and it could promise, and it was never quite clear to contemporary writers if it was a vice or a virtue. Thomas Hobbes may have attributed to it the institution of language and David Hume identified it as "that love of truth, [...] the source of all our enquiries," but for others curiosity and speculation was depicted as the cause of mankind's errors.[6] Travel could also be ontologically transgressive, a mark of threatening ambition that took the form of a perceptible violation of categories. Curiosity, after all, is a synonym for travel, insofar as either or both allow one to see beyond one's place.[7] As such, travel and curiosity are also potentially revolutionary and certainly life-changing. It was not just early modern collectors and scientists, writers and printers, producers and consumers who were curious. The desire to travel, to uproot, to start anew, led ever more people to acquire the habit of curiosity and to challenge the social order to stay; thereby making the first travellers to a certain place curiosities themselves. The wondrous develops in the curious, and early modern forms of wonder become taxonomies within the wider category of the curious, stripped of their wondrous connotations. In this way, the mysteries of the wondrous are categorised and organised by the curious, rendering what was previously beyond comprehension as intelligible or mundane. Travel and travel writing are essential to this process, not least because travel brought people face to face with the wondrous on a routine basis. The explosion of travel and travel narratives in the early modern period meant that accounts of the strange, the marvellous, and the outright wondrous were increasingly common. How travellers treated these encounters, how the wondrous encountered abroad was collected, categorised, and brought home, is essential in understanding not only early modern conceptions of the wonderful, but how also how wonder could transition into the curious.

In this curiosity about abroad lay value for those who knew and could share their knowledge, seen most clearly in the interrelationship between inquiry and collecting which permeated early modern Europe. Ambition is the essence of inquiry, of wanting to know, and for Augustine and many writers, it was a pride which turned the mind away from God.[8] Gossip, the unregulated trade of

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6   David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) pt. 3, bk. 2, sec. 10: 448-49; Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago, IL, and London, University of Chicago Press, 2001) 1.

7   Benedict, *Curiosity* 2.

8   Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York, Zone Books, 1998) 121-22.

unverified information that commodified others, was considered as reprobate as usury, idleness, gluttony or hoarding, a self-serving, vicious acquisitiveness that feeds off society for personal gain. Just as deceitful was the assertive pretence to a professional identity, what Barbara Benedict has called "the colonization of values by self-defined experts."[9] Recruiters, agents of travel, were such self-defined experts who walked the fine line between mastering, and being mastered by, their curiosity.

But curiosity about abroad, about a better life, was no idle novelty; nor was it useless or meaningless as some would have it.[10] Migrant recruiters grew to become virtuosi in the construction of wondrous collections about life abroad; they were collectors with a cabinet-mind, using details as tokens of power in the retailing of inquiry, production, and consumption.[11] What Jürgen Habermas has described as the commodification of art in the eighteenth century can be argued for information about opportunities abroad in the seventeenth and thereafter: just as objects, discoveries, literature, theatre, and exhibitions freed culture from the service of state power, the commodification of curiosity about life abroad opened up the possibility of migration to a growing body-politic hungry to consume possibility.[12]

Curiosity was also, or perhaps especially, an appetite for wonder. Recruiters learned to rearrange the items of information available to them to suit not just an idiosyncratic system of classification, as in ordering a cabinet of curiosities, but more importantly in order to meet the needs of a particular consumer or audience. From village to village, agents reinterpreted the nature of their audience by relative, not absolute, principles, carefully heeding what aspects of their stories best appealed to a local audience. Print classified and taxonomized curiosity and regulated it through the application of facts, of "evidence." But the spoken word, the tall tales, and liberal loquaciousness of the migrant agents undermined a disciplined and methodological regulation of information, leading to a breakdown of objective truth.[13]

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[9]   Benedict, *Curiosity* 2.

[10]   Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Autumn 1991): 93-124.

[11]   Laura Seelig, "The Munich Kunstkammer, 1565-1807," *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 76-89.

[12]   Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

[13]   Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, Vintage Books, 1970); Andrew Curran and Patrick Graille, "Introduction," *Faces of*

Yet in early modern Europe the curious appetite became ever-more empirical, and while a curious villager could not see America, or another land of their imagination abroad, he and she could see a facet of empirical evidence for the added-value of emigration in the living person of the recruiter. Ideas are faint, but visual impressions are forceful, and the printed prohibitions on emigration served only to raise the curiosity of villagers, then met with the physical presence of a Newlander in their midst.[14] Seeing rarities, Barbara Benedict has convincingly argued,

> occult or material, comes to represent the knowledge of the world, in the same way that Renaissance wonder cabinets displayed the universe [...] Symbolically, curiosities collected from overseas represent travel; seeing and possessing them demonstrates the knowledge of the world, particularly for those whose class and means prohibit them from travel itself.[15]

The ambition to know, and to dare to know and then act on that knowledge by emigrating, was drawn out by the actions of recruiters, who came to represent travel and curiosity. What was revolutionary was their insistence that, irrespective of class and means, travel was open to all. Newlander recruiters were transgressives, eluding identity and dismantling boundaries, purportedly serving others while entirely serving themselves.

It was this perception of a better opportunity and new beginning, fuelled by a desire to improve and succeed, which prompted the decision to uproot and seek a new life abroad. An individual's or family's commitment to uproot and transplant abroad was rarely made on the spur of the moment, but it was almost always made as a result of the promotional energies of a recruiter, a woman or more usually a man who had been abroad and returned home, to share the story of success. Where bold text declared the possibilities on offer abroad, an emigrant fresh-returned to his or her homeland gave comforting accent to the printed abstractions which promoted or outlawed emigration; parsed and phrased in a way which made the foreign familiar and the strange exotic. The migrant recruiter dared to flout laws and regulations, emboldened by the

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Monstrosity, special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21, no .2 (May 1997): 3-4, 8-9, 12; Daston, "Marvelous Facts" 94-95.

[14] Oliver A. Johnson, *The Mind of David Hume: A Companion to Book I of "A Treatise of Human Nature"* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995) 40-41.

[15] Benedict, *Curiosity* 17.

liberties secured abroad to return home and share in his success. He bribed and badgered, caroused and cajoled, dared and declaimed, sang and swore, all in the name of encouraging others to follow in his path, to come with him and to win a new life as he had done. The hardship of the journey was denied, or at very least diminished; the vagaries of the experience on arrival simplified to one key point: abroad, wherever was not here, was the best poor man's country, where freedom and liberties and land and life were abundant and long.[16] No more the drudgery of the old; new, free, lands were waiting which willing migrants could plant and populate.

Yet the process could also be a dangerous one, made even more so by the cunning and guile of these speculators in hope, these migrant escorts and traffickers whose actions earned them so many derogatory names. At best, they were "Newlanders," men and women who had made the trip abroad at least once, or purported to have done so, and who now sought to gain from assisting others to relocate. At worst, they took payment for a journey that they did not see through to the end, leaving naïve, poor, and frequently ill people to fend for themselves in foreign languages and in foreign lands. Often, all that survives of these recruiters' actions are reports of their damning deeds.

As the fashion for emigration grew in Europe after the great depopulation and general upheavals of the Thirty Years' War, so did the proclivity of recruiters. It was virtually impossible in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe to contemplate emigration without coming under the influence of an agent or advertiser.[17] Newlanders and recruiters, working as private enterprisers and for state and other agencies, were densely packed throughout the territories, often coming into direct competition with one another. This rivalry led to an increase in, and further exaggeration of, the literature produced about America, in particular, and about opportunities for life abroad. One brochure describing North America, in common circulation along the Rhine in the first half of the eighteenth century, noted: "[…] to speak about hunting, the bison practically put their heads in the window of the log-cabin, waiting to be shot. And wolves are not as big as in Europe and can easily be tamed."[18] Recruiters were keenly aware

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[16]   James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

[17]   Hermann von Freeden and Georg Smolka, eds., *Auswanderung: Bilder und Skizzen aus der Geschichte der deutschen Auswanderung*, (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1937) 17.

[18]   Jean-Pierre Purry and Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Der nunmehro in der Neuen Welt vergnügt und ohne Heim-Wehe lebende Schweitzer. Oder: Kurtze und eigentliche Beschreibung des gegenwärtigen Zustandes der königlich englischen Provinz Carolina, aus dem neulich*

which aspects of life abroad to highlight and to exaggerate; everything that incensed individuals about life in the old world could be compared to and contrasted with the new. Migrants could only conceive of a better life abroad by associating it with the social, economic, and religious landscape they had left behind. The dream of a new world was sold as a corrective to the drudgery of existence at home. Recruiters spoke of a life abroad festooned with unlimited hunting rights, freedom from military service, religious toleration, limitless land, and abundant food. To this extent, a migrant recruiter's success depended on his ability to recognise a particular region's shortcomings and thereby to stress how life abroad would be different and better. There was no room here for taciturn individuals; recruiters combined human resource management skills with oral sales techniques, all wrapped up in showmanship, and delivered in a familiar, local, accent.[19]

Recruiters and "Newlanders" emerged as a network of businessmen who engaged in the transportation of migrants largely as a supplementary profession, principally to subsidize or meet the full cost of passage to and from their home, but also as a means of turning a profit and, unusually in such an underhand business, acquiring a reputation. Some, certainly not all, appear to have sought notoriety through their actions. Such fame served a number of recruiters well, gaining them new contracts for the raising of further migrants. For others, positive public regard turned to infamy. Some traffickers simply disappeared into the fog of history, covering over their footprints and leaving little or no trace behind. Recruiters who worked freelance, or on one-off contracts with river transporters or shipping agents, were often more ruthless, assuming new personae to aid their search for success.[20] They keenly engaged in a form of self-promotion, since personal appearance and an ability to form a quick rapport and a trusting relationship with an audience were important aspects of the recruiter's profession.[21] Colonist recruiters, by their very actions, were living proof that

angekommenen Briefen der Alldorten sich befindenden Schweizerern zusammengetragen von J.K.L. (Bern: Johannes Bondeli, 1734).

[19] Agnes Bretting and Hartmut Bickelmann, eds., *Auswanderungsagenturen und Auswanderungsvereine im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991) 71.

[20] *Herrn Pastor Mühlenbergs Nachricht von merkwürdigen Exempeln aus seiner Amtsführung Sechstes Exempel, Neunte Fortsetzung Der Nachricht von einigen Evangelischen Gemeinen in America, absonderlich in Pennsylvanien* (Halle: In Verlegung des Waisenhauses, 1765) 997-1002.

[21] Berit Brattne and Sune Åkerman, "The Importance of the Transport Sector for Mass Emigration," *From Sweden to America: A History of the Migration*, ed. Harald Runblom and Hans Norman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976) 195.

"whosoever goes to Pennsylvania as a servant, shall be a gentleman; as a maid, shall be a lady; as a farmer, shall be a nobleman; as a commoner and tradesman, he shall be a baron."[22]

Recruiters also bridged a gap between literacy, illiteracy and languages. Unable to read the mass of literature on the world beyond their home region, or to read at all, many would-be migrants were a willing audience for recruiters telling stories of the colonial experience.[23] Likewise, agents who offered colonists details of life abroad and contracts of terms of settlement in translation, also gained an advantage. While future generations of migrants would negotiate daily life using two or more languages, the ability to seal contracts and barter for better prices and conditions in a language other than their own was far from the norm for German migrants.[24] Travellers faced documentation in many languages, even on the river journey from their home village to their first major point of transit. Migrant recruiters not only encouraged people to uproot and move, but they also accompanied their charges along the route, enabling passage into a little-known, foreign, and intimidating wider world.

The role of migration agents emerged and grew in importance because of their access – real or perceived – to information about opportunities abroad.[25] More than this, traders in migrants took advantage of a lack of knowledge about "abroad": about opportunities, about how to reach one's destination, what to take along for the trip, how much it would cost, what to say and what to do on arrival. With the beginnings of the migrant trade in the seventeenth century, an emergent *Zeitgeist* came to see ignorance as a commodity; a new understanding of the value, both political and economic, of vague threats and incalculable risk for whoever sought to gain from unsuccessfully providing solutions to inscrutable problems.[26] Agents therefore needed ignorance just as much as they

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22   *Mühlenbergs Nachricht* 998.

23   Walter Allen Knittle, *Early Eighteenth Century Palatine Emigration: A British Government Redemptioner Project to Manufacture Naval Stores* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979) 218.

24   A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property: German Lutherans in British Colonial America* (Baltimore, MD and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 7.

25   "Newlander" in English first appears in use about America in the title of a pamphlet about sea-sickness, scurvy and diet published in 1630: William Vaughan, *The Newlanders Cure Aswell of Those Violent Sicknesses which Distemper Most Minds in These Latter Dayes: as Also by a Cheape and Newfound Dyet, to Preserue the Body Sound and Free from all Diseases, Vntill the Last Date of Life, Through Extreamity of Age* (London: Nicholas Okes for Francis Constable, 1630).

26   Linsey McGoey, "Strategic Unknowns: Towards a Sociology of Ignorance," *Economy and Society* 41, no. 1 (February 2012): 9.

needed knowledge: they preyed on the non-knowledge – the lack of knowledge or ignorance – of would-be migrants, supplying them with information and disinformation at a cost. Ignorance has many interesting surrogates and overlaps in many different ways with secrecy, stupidity, apathy, censorship, disinformation, faith, and forgetfulness; ignorance interacts with these states just as much as it is generated by them.[27] Agents needed to control the flow and supply of information about life abroad; if "too much" information were freely available, then prospective migrants would have no need for agents and the secrets they retailed. Agents were purveyors of ignorance and non-knowledge just as much as they were traders in information and knowledge.

Debates over ignorance and knowledge go back at least as far as Socrates, but migration recruiters made use of a lack of knowledge in a new way, taking advantage of it for their own ends, giving it a value in social and economic life. Non-knowledge of opportunities was, and is, a social fact, not merely an impediment to, or precursor of, knowledge, but a productive force in and of itself.[28] It is important, then, to challenge the strict opposition between knowledge and ignorance to highlight the reciprocal ways that "ignorance and opacity collude or compete with knowledge in mobilizing the flows of energy, desire, goods, meanings, *persons*."[29]

Migration agents took advantage of the productive and generative effects of "negative knowledges" such as ignorance, uncertainty, and ambiguity in the selling of souls in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If knowledge is fixed as a case of the application of observation operations, then non-knowledge has an operative relevance: not only for cognitive operations, but for all communicative operations, and therefore also for social action. Non-knowledge is largely viewed as a kind of deviation from true knowledge, or the shape of interest-driven ideology.[30] Social interaction, it is held, is based on consensus and on shared knowledge, and any challenges to the idea of a single true knowledge have remained limited.[31] The resulting distinction between construed and non-

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[27]   Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger, eds., *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008) 2.

[28]   What Bataille called the "honesty of nonknowledge": Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, ed. Stuart Kendall, trans. Stuart and Michelle Kendall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) 201.

[29]   Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) 4 (emphasis added).

[30]   Klaus P. Japp, "Distinguishing Non-Knowledge," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 225.

[31]   Michael Smithson, "Towards a Social Theory of Ignorance," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 15, no. 2 (1985): 151-72.

construed reality leads to a devaluation of non-knowledge: a knowable, comprehensible reality *sui generis* is pervasive. Yet, if neither consensus nor true knowledge is viewed as the primary or even occasional basis for social interaction, then non-knowledge has an implicit position.

When it comes to migration, a primary consideration is just how much did migrants know about the process of migration prior to embarking on the journey? If faced with too little information, or with too much, with unwanted or inconvenient truths or a paucity of detail, if a would-be migrant swayed more to stay or to go: is this push or pull? The effort to understand personal and institutional action and inaction in the face of unwanted or simply inconvenient facts demands attention to what has been called "antiepistemology," the study of non-knowledge or the art of how knowledge is deflected, covered and obscured.[32] If epistemology explores the nature, methodology, and limits of the production of knowledge, antiepistemology asks after its shadow: the nature of non-knowledge, and the political and social practices embedded in the effort to suppress or to promote new forms of ambiguity and ignorance.[33] In persuading people to uproot, information was regularly moulded for the convenience of the agent, deflecting attention away from challenges, covering up inconvenient truths, obscuring reality. Agents cast a long shadow over the decision to migrate, and over where to go. While they cast this shadow, they also exist in its darkness, in its ignorance. It would take many decades before the light would dawn for migrants and they could, and would, make decisions to move on the basis of more secure outcomes.

Migrant recruiters and traffickers are traders in the marketplace of cultures of knowing and not-knowing, building and rebuilding what is already known, supplying the materials with which to dream and then make that dream of a better life a reality. Agents bridged divides in geography, in literacy and illiteracy, in economic security and insecurity, in freedom and servitude. They were scoundrels and saviours in differing measure, at different times and in different places, as shall be seen below. But quite simply, without their actions, the entire process of early modern migration would have been inconceivable.[34] As such, they laid the groundwork for subsequent mass migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Without the actions of migrant recruiters, informal webs of contact and communication could not have been maintained

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[32] Peter Galison, "Removing Knowledge," *Critical Inquiry* 31 (Autumn, 2004): 237.

[33] McGoey, "Strategic Unknowns" 3.

[34] Friedrich Lotz, "Die frühtheresianische Kolonisation des Banats (1740-1762)," *Gedenkschrift für Harold Steinacker (1875-1965)*, Buchreihe der Südostdeutschen Historischen Kommission, vol. 16 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1966) 153.

among migrants and, by extension, further migration might not have taken place. Migrant recruiters were intrinsic to the process of migration and to the development of new settlements, new communities and new societies. A facilitator, an escort, at times a swindler and a cheat, the migrant recruiter bound an ever-shrinking world together with ties of information, disinformation, and the hope of a better future.

Although migrant recruiters had operated for many centuries throughout Europe, they assumed a greater importance with the opening up of the Atlantic colonies to continental European migrants in the seventeenth century. In North America, from the very early days of settlement in William Penn's "Pennsylvania" in the 1670s and '80s, fellow Quakers and acquaintances of the colonial proprietor were employed to recruit colonists and labourers for the territory, thereby becoming some of the first recruiters to work for the colonization of British North America in the German lands.[35] Moreover, agents for the American colonies could access information about overseas opportunities that was not generally known to emigrants, endowing such information with an air of credulity it might otherwise lack. Both written and oral reports turned the previously ignorant, through either illiteracy or geographical isolation, into informed would-be consumers of colonial life. Aspiring emigrants had once trusted fantastical images of life in the British colonies, believing that "in America or Pennsylvania roasted pigeons are going to fly into their mouths without their having to work for them." On the other hand, these semi-mystical tales of success, and their positive effect on colonization, were also countered by lurid descriptions of the untold adversities early migrants had to face. Recruiters helped to convince and cajole migrants to test out opportunities abroad, which they themselves could detail through carefully collected, or indeed sometimes shamelessly embellished, first-hand testimonies.[36]

As a result of all these events, recruiters came to be seen as men and women between worlds. They were living proof that families and communities separated by borders and oceans could continue to exist in a network of communication and relationships.[37] Recruiters alleviated potential feelings of

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[35]   William I. Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania* (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1935) 325-28.

[36]   Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania*, ed. and trans. Oscar Handlin and John Clive, The John Harvard Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960) 21.

[37]   Stephan W. Görisch, *Information zwischen Werbung und Warnung: Die Rolle der Amerikaliteratur in der Auswanderung des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Hessische historische Komission, 1991); Charles M. Hall, *The Atlantic Bridge to Germany*, vol. II, Hessen Part A, Rheinland-Pfalz Part B (Logan, UT: Everton Publishers, 1974); Ira

isolation or disorientation which emigration might otherwise have caused.[38] What has been argued for steam-powered migration in the nineteenth century can equally be argued for the eighteenth: the many colonist agents who crossed the Atlantic "cement[ed] the existing commercial and industrial ties" and supplied a niche market in information.[39] Information from new lands was transmitted by returning travellers and agents in various forms, perhaps none more important than the transportation of letters to and from family members in different parts of Europe and America. Letters sent back to relatives and friends in the homeland by newly-settled migrants made mention of the land they worked, of money loaned for the purchase of household items, and of the assistance given by estate owners or state authorities to acquire farm animals and equipment. Colonists returning to the home country not only carried these letters, but also informally transmitted news of the colonies all along the route between the seaport where they disembarked and the point of final destination. In no time, these letter-bearers acquired the role of immigration agents and became involved in supplying information concerning life abroad. In this way, return migrants became an invaluable link in the migratory chain. Indeed, letter-carrying provides a classic case of migration triggering migration; areas of emigration correspond neatly with places through which letters from abroad passed or, more accurately, where return migrants carried letters from colonists abroad. These "Newlanders" came to inform potential emigrants about the opportunities abroad, and also to assist would-be migrants with their travel plans.[40] Despite their private-public nature, or perhaps precisely because of the

Glazier, and Luigi de Rosa, eds., *Migration across Time and Nations: Population Mobility in Historical Context* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986). David Hancock, "Self-Organised Complexity and the Emergence of an Atlantic Market Economy, 1651-1815: The Case of Madeira," paper presented at "The Emergence of the Atlantic Economy" conference sponsored by the Program in the Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World, College of Charleston, October 1999, 9, refers to information in the eighteenth century not as a "hub-and-spoke" process that ran from peripheries to the metropolis and back, but as threats of a spider web that stretched with infinite complexity over the whole of the Atlantic basin.

[38] Jörg Nagler, "Ethnic Persistence and Transformation. A Response to Kathleen N. Conzen," Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Making Their Own America. Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer* (New York, Oxford and Munich: Berg, 1990) 41.

[39] Dirk Hoerder and Horst Rössler, eds., *Distant Magnets: Expectations and Realities in the Immigrant Experience* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1993) 18.

[40] Georg Fertig, *Lokales Leben, atlantische Welt. Die Entscheidung zur Auswanderung vom Rhein nach Nordamerika im 18. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2000).

personal nature of the correspondence, letters were often read aloud to assembled groups, to encourage emigration, binding doubtful migrants with ties of personal success in new-world lands. They were related to the well-being of an entire village community and were forceful in convincing people to stay or to go. Letters were also copied and widely circulated, finding an audience far beyond that ever imagined by the author.[41] When Emmanuel Altham, Captain of the *Little James*, spent the summer of 1623 in New England, for example, he wrote of his experiences to his brother in England. Looking out for "what profit is to be raised here," Altham instructed his brother to share news of his success with family and friends; "I pray, sir," he wrote, "let them read this letter, either the same or a copy of the same."[42]

Significantly, as state-directed settlement in Europe came to compete with state-controlled emigration to New World colonies beyond Europe, recruiters learnt to market their destination in a language coined, and previously reserved, for the often more-favoured American colonies. Settlers who through their travels became colonist agents for the settlement of areas of Europe quickly realized that, to compete with the market dominance of the brand "America," they needed to repackage "old Europe" as a new, equally desirous destination. America had become a byword for opportunity, success, and freedom from rack and ruin. It was a panacea for life's ills, and colonist recruiters for the east hoped they could make generic a brand that had made great profit for recruiters working the westward enterprise. America's reputation as the best poor man's country grew throughout the seventeenth century. Restriction and outright prohibition on emigration to America may also have endowed the destination with an air of allure and intrigue; taken together with rumours of limitless land and opportunity, an amorphous America appeared the most advantageous destination for hard-working colonists.[43]

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[41] For letters in the emigration process, see Peter Mesenhöller, "Der Auswandererbrief. Bedingungen und Typik schriftlicher Kommunikation im Auswanderungsprozeß," *Der große Aufbruch: Studien zur Amerikaauswanderung*, ed. Peter Assion (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1985) 111-24; Leo Schelbert and Hedwig Rappolt, *Alles is ganz anders hier. Auswandererschicksale in Briefen aus zwei Jahrhunderten* (Olten/Freiburg i. Br.: Walter Verlag, 1977); Hansmartin Schwarzmaier, "Auswandererbriefe aus Nordamerika. Quellen im Grenzbereich von Geschichtlicher Landeskunde, Wanderungsforschung und Literatursoziologie," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 126 (1978): 303-369.

[42] David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 8-9.

[43] Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property* 23.

Not every letter flattered the new land, and many recruiters found it necessary, sometimes essential, to alter the correspondence they carried in order to support the verbal claims made for a better life overseas. Some contemporaries, disappointed by the gap between what they expected and what they encountered in their new homes, claimed that recruiters were trained in the art of deception, others insisted that Jews, based at Rotterdam, were responsible for censoring emigrant letters and creating one-sided views of life abroad.[44]

The letter trade was a crucial part of information exchange in the Atlantic world and in continental Europe; without it, the intensity and direction of migration streams would certainly have been very different. Many letters only survive as they were confiscated by anti-emigration agencies of the state, used subsequently as anti-emigration propaganda by governmental authorities, thereby rendering them atypical of the genre of migrant letter which circulated more widely.[45] Surviving correspondence does not offer a balanced view of the migratory experience. For a growing body of Europeans, emigration was the ultimate act in an exercise of personal liberty; America was the "Land of Freedom," which "made the poor smart."[46] When Lorenz Kunkel was interviewed by local officials in 1751, to determine if he might be permitted to quit his northern Swiss home, he mentioned that a "Newlander" recruiter had influenced his wish to depart for America.[47]

Recruiters were more than information links between the old world and the new or between western, central, and eastern Europe: they were facilitators who convinced migrants of the rectitude of their decision to move, grounded on their own personal experience as successful emigrants. By focusing our attention on the actions of recruiters, we can come to more completely understand the organization and execution of processes of migration, in the past and in our world today.

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[44] Georg Fertig, "'Die mit dem Judenspieß so offt aus- und einfahren.' Transatlantische Kommunikation, territoriale Bürokratie und pietistische Moral im 18. Jahrhundert," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 27 (1998): 39-41; Agnes Bretting, "Funktion und Bedeutung der Auswanderungsagenturen in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert," *Auswanderungsagenturen und Auswanderungsvereine im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Agnes Bretting and Hartmut Bickelman (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991) 16; Andreas Brinck, *Die deutsche Auswanderungswelle in die britischen Kolonien Nordamerikas um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993) 101-103; August Hermann Francke, "Die Briefe des Jahres 1753," *Band II 1753-1762*, ed. Kurt Aland (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018) 74.

[45] Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers* 116.

[46] Marie Hall Ets, *Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970) 185.

[47] *Staatsarchiv Marburg*, Bestand 80, I-II, XXXII A, Nr. 7, f.19 v.20.

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