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# Stories [that] Matter: Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe

*Open Book Publishers*

by Ladan Rahbari & Olga Burlyuk

This book project was initiated amidst the ongoing uncertainties engendered by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In January 2021, our unexpected first encounter occurred as both of us (editors) contributed articles to the *Journal of Narrative Politics*, expounding upon our individual experiences as migrant academics ([Burlyuk, 2019](#); [Rahbari, 2020](#)). Our convergence stemmed from a shared discontent and a yearning to engage in “academic storytelling”—an endeavor encompassing narratives about academics and narratives intertwined with our own scholarly pursuits. Through our initial interactions via email, this frustration evolved into a profound connection, culminating in our online meeting despite the impediments posed by COVID-19 regulations. It is not an exaggeration to say that that first online meeting laid the foundation for this book project.

During the initial phases of conceiving the idea of this book project, we (the editors) talked about how the articles mentioned above, examining the plight of academic migrants and their experiences of precarity, garnered notable attention within our respective academic circles and students. This attention manifested in emotionally charged emails we received – expressing support, solidarity, and, at times, surprise, curiosity, irritation, and anger. Through the introspective nature of our autobiographical contributions, we realized that our connection extended not only to each other but also encompassed a wide network of scholars from the “Global South.” Within this network, the inception of “Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe” arose as a collective endeavor to connect the various stars and form a constellation.

This collection comprises narratives shared by migrant academics from the Global South (conceived to include also European peripheries), who have traversed academic landscapes within the Global North. Contributors to this volume represent different geographies and academic spaces in terms of their respective “birth” and “stay” countries, academic institutions that have employed them at one time or another, academic disciplines they “belong to”, and stages in their academic careers. We do not define migration singularly; instead, the chapters of this book explore the diverse arrays of how migrancy and mobility are experienced within the academic context. The contributors seek to challenge and deconstruct the colonial discourse surrounding academic mobility through the prism of autobiographical and autoethnographic accounts. Their narratives illuminate the experiences of precarity, resilience, care, and solidarity encountered within the marginalized realms of academia. By engaging with precarity, the authors critically analyze diverse aspects of academic existence, encompassing hiring practices, entrenched divisions of labor steeped in cultural norms, systemic discrimination, racialization, gendered hierarchies, sexual violence and more. Venturing beyond the confines of traditional academic styles, they embrace autobiography and autoethnography as intersecting scholarly methodologies, effectively blurring the dichotomies between the institutional

framework and the individual, the rational and the subjective, and the domains of science, theory, and arts.

The book consists of an introduction, 21 narrative chapters, and an afterword. Although we thought long and hard about how best to order the stories, none of the essays speaks to one theme, and all raise *multiple* questions. Hence, the table of contents is but a recommendation: like Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, the stories in this book can be read in different sequences to a different effect/affect.

This volume is aimed to captivate not only scholars in the field of migration studies and studies of higher education and academic mobility but also (specifically) educators and students engaged in disciplines such as political science, sociology, postcolonial studies, gender and race studies, critical border studies, and beyond. Additionally, the interdisciplinary nature of this collection endeavors to engage university diversity officers, administrators, and key decision-makers. But our ambition does not stop there: by incorporating a diverse range of contributions in terms of format and style, including poetry and creative prose, this collection aspires to be accessible and engrossing for a wide readership.


As the readers embark on reading this book, we would like to emphasize that the process of writing the narratives in this book has been challenging, emotionally draining, and demanding for some of the contributors while simultaneously invigorating, empowering, and transformative for others. The act of documenting critical autoethnography and autobiography from the margins is, in itself, a precarious undertaking. We (the editors) are indebted to all the contributors who have engaged in the intellectual, emotional, and political labor of sharing their personal stories in this collection. Our aspiration is that this compilation serves as a catalyst for increasing awareness regarding the precarious circumstances faced by migrant academics.

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[Migrant Academics' Narratives of Precarity and Resilience in Europe](#)

[This volume consists of narratives of migrant academics from the Global South within academia in the Global North. The autobiographic and autoethnographic contributions to this collection aim to decolonise the discourse around academic mobility by highlighting experiences of precarity, resilience, c...](#)



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