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Julius-Cezar MacQuarie

Invisible Migrant Nightworkers in 24/7 London

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Julius-Cezar MacQuarie

Invisible Migrant Nightworkers in 24/7 London

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie
Institute for Social Science in the 21st Century (ISS21)
University College Cork
Cork, Ireland

ISSN 2364-4087 ISSN 2364-4095 (electronic)
IMISCOE Research Series
ISBN 978-3-031-36185-2 ISBN 978-3-031-36186-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36186-9

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For Magda.
And for all nightworkers.

Preface

Over five years ago, I defended my PhD thesis in front of the Doctoral Committee at Central European University, at the time based in Budapest, Hungary. But the idea of becoming a night researcher to reach out to nightworkers originated during night walks in London, in 2012. Yet, this nightnographic study had been carried out on the backdrop of displaced people who sought refuge from the Syrian war in Europe. During the 2015 'long summer of migration'[1] that stretched into 2016, moving images swept the online and offline worlds with thousands of Syrian refugees crossing territorial borders to save or repair their lives ruined by war. From researching to writing up this book, hundreds of millions of people have been displaced. By May 2022, 100M people were forcibly displaced worldwide, of which 10.7M were victims of the war in Ukraine.[2] This record level of displacement suggests that a large segment of those who find refuge will end up in rubbish jobs, with many working the nightshift and producing cheaply by putting their bodies under strains, practically breaking their backs, ruining their knees and hips to make a living in foreign countries.

My experience as migrant nightworker in the late 1990s in Istanbul has influenced the choice of topic – hard, invisible labour done by migrants travelling abroad to work. My professional encounters as daytime assistant psychologist and night outreach worker with the UK National Health Service have influenced and often intersected with my multidisciplinary research pursuits. To gain (and share) unique insights into the combined emotional, psychophysical and social strands of the DNA that make up the experiences of transnational migrants means to move closer to an understanding of what makes the phenomenon of migrant bodies crossing

[1] Kasparek, B. and Speer, M. (2015). Of hope. Hungary and the long summer of migration (Translation: Elena Buck). Online at https://bordermonitoring.eu/ungarn/2015/09/of-hope-en/ Accessed 27.05.2021.

[2] This figure amounts to more than the entire population of Germany. Reported by UNHCR, UN Refugee Agency. (2023). Ukraine Emergency. Online at: https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/ and https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/ Accessed: 26.04.2023

borders so complex, and why it is so complicated to grasp, let alone predict its ebbs and flows.

This unconventional research provides a meta-level perspective onto a mode of labouring that has so far been only sketched by previous scholarship in migration and the emerging fields of night studies. My hope is that, as an insider of a world that is invisible and hard to access for the ethnographers (usually daytime researchers), my study could contribute to these fields by adding the embodied dimension to an anthropology of nightwork. Notwithstanding the modest efforts that depict the nocturnal city, I am deeply appreciative of the previous studies that have guided my research to arrive at the point of drafting this book, like the seamen indebted to the lighthouse that directs their ships to safe shoring. Nightshift workers survive bodily precariousness because they are immune to co-workers' needs, and not because they offer each other mutual support out of humanness. This finding is perhaps counter-intuitive to solidarity proponents in the scholarly literature. In this sense, I caution the reader, that I am deeply aware of (and for) transnational solidarity among people who need to cross borders because they experience inequalities (gender, social, economic), and between countries. This work is not a critique to international solidarity, but given the hostility, seething with xenophobic, nationalistic tendencies, I find myself less optimistic about the fragile possibilities for solidarity among precarious nightworkers, who vie against one another to keep their low-waged jobs.

The writing of this book happened in stages, with the resounding of Brexit (the UK leaving the EU), transiting period ending on 30 June 2021, while COVID-19[3] pandemic still held a grip on the world. I drafted the first version of the manuscript, three weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine. This final version was sent to the printers, as it were, at a time when the British Government plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, despite the 'catastrophic mental and physical harm' to these people seeking safety (Taylor 2023).[4] Considering the background upon which I designed, carried out the research and have written this book, the world has become much more hostile towards migrants (but harsher for displaced people, refugees or asylum seekers, whichever the label). More, Freedom of Movement for workers in the EU has become, regrettably, less free since Brexit. This hostile and unwelcoming atmosphere amplified over the 'long summer of migration', and it has culminated in January 2021 with the new point-based immigration system that has come into force as a result of Brexit, which prevents many migrants on low income in the UK's labour market to apply for work visa. Thus, support for integration of migrants into the host societies is needed more than ever, and in addition to the political efforts, we need to get involved in supporting organisations that uphold migrants' rights.

The world is in need of repair, and on my part, I have taken some steps to begin this process of reparation. As an intern with *Migrants Organise* (UK), I was

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[3] COVID-19 is shorthand for SARS-CoV-2, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.

[4] The Guardian. (2023). UK medical bodies 'gravely concerned' over Rwanda deportation scheme. Online at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/apr/24/uk-medical-bodies-gravely-concerned-over-rwanda-deportation-scheme. Accessed 26.04.2023.

campaigning for migrants' rights to London Living Wage rates for cleaners, in 2012. As Migrant Ambassador of *Migrant Voice* (UK), I committed myself to speak up and give faces to the invisible migrants in London. During the INTEGRIM Fellowship, I have upheld the promotion and implementation of social labour rights and integration policies for migrants in Europe. In this sense, I am sympathetic with the body of scholarship that is critical of humanitarian organisations portraying migrants and refugees as being lost and hopeless (Rajaram 2002; Massari 2021), and as such I developed a unique methodology to examine the night and enable researchers to foreground migrants to tell their *real* stories to mixed audiences on *reel*, as well as in audio or written formats, which has materialised in a book chapter published in the same IMISCOE Springer Research Series (Nikielska-Sekula and Desille (Eds.) 2021). This book fulfils the INTEGRIM Fellowship.

In truth, the book is part of a project of *committed ethnography* that has begun somewhat unwarily with the co-production of the first short film in the trilogy (2013–20), *Invisible Lives: Romanian Night Shift Workers in London*, winner of *2013 Roundtable Projects*, Romanian Cultural Centre, London (2013). Since finishing this research, I have also produced a podcast series (NightWorkPod Podcast, CEU Podcasts 2018–present) to reach out to mixed audiences and critical public. And to raise awareness and to engage the public with anthropological findings, I have contributed to podcasts and blogs advocating for reparations to migrant nightworkers' rights to decent work conditions. More, I initiated discussions with the trade unions to develop a *Nightworker Charter*, which I included in the *Coda* of this book, in its final chapter. These core *five principles for nightwork* have grown out of my collaborations with two non-governmental organisations (NGO), Migrant Voice, UK, and Nighttime.org. The latter NGO advocates for nightlife industry workers in a post-COVID-19 world and has been proposing support models for nightlife industry workers, individuals and vulnerable populations under the *Global Nighttime Recovery Plan*: *Sustaining Nightlife Scenes* (2020). This *committed ethnography* project has visibilised the workers, even if in small ways and at least for the ethnographic eye, to the curious academic audience and the public. It is important to reflect on the role that we all play in repairing the damage that neoliberal or post-circadian capitalism has been inflicted on the lives of so many, in improving the future of work together, in pre-emptying arrivals of long summers of migration, and in preventing the spread of Rwanda-like regimes of deportations.

Cork, Ireland
11 July 2023

Julius-Cezar MacQuarie

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Acknowledgements

I take this occasion to express my deep gratitude to each and every one who gave me the practical and emotional support to see the closure of a ten-year long project that culminates with this book, born out of my doctoral thesis.

Particularly, I thank migrant men and women for sharing their insights from working the nightshift and their life stories with me. I hope that my book is a true reflection of what they told me and that my analysis reflects the way they see and feel things that make up their nightwork world and migrant lives. My hope is that nightshift does not break their bodies or bend their determined minds.

I expressly thank my PhD supervisors Professor Violetta Zentai and Professor Prem Kumar Rajaram who offered their support, guidance and friendly advice during my doctoral studies, encouragement, and practical help in the last five postdoctoral years. Under Professor Zentai's leadership the wonderful team at the Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University (CEU), has given me the haven I needed to complete this PhD project. Her piercing insights have guided this work up to the point of writing this book, and I am deeply indebted for her advice. The CEU's Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology has provided me with the adequate resources. Most importantly Professor Rajaram, the co-supervisor, shared very insightful comments, critique and advice which have been incorporated into the corporeal aspects of this book.

I was lucky to have been given the opportunity to embark the International Training Network programme financed by the European Commission under the grant agreement № 316796, entitled *Integration and International Migration: Pathways and Integration Policies* (INTEGRIM). This generous Marie-Skłodowska Curie INTEGRIM Fellowship has enabled me to carry out one-year long anthropological fieldwork and to benefit from my six-month secondment at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research (SCMR), University of Sussex, under the mentorship of Professor Mike Collyer. I am grateful for his time and kindness with which he hosted me at SCMR, and for his feedback and useful comments throughout my time with the INTEGRIM network and, specifically, while being part of the 'labour and social integration' working group that he coordinated.

I am also very grateful to Professor Ger Duijzings for inviting me to join his *Nightlaboratory*, when we were both associated with the School of East European and Slavonic Studies, University College London. As he would later write in his external examiner report on my PhD thesis, this rather impossible or incredible ethnographic practice begun with our night walks in London, while I was his graduate student. His invaluable support to make the step from a Research Masters graduate to PhD studies is only equalled by the valuable feedback and comments on two chapters, which were a good starting point to transform the thesis into a book.

The list of people to whom I am indebted for their direct insights, comments and feedback during the several rounds of editing continues with Dr Sara Svenson, Dr Codruța Cuceu, Dr Valentin-Veron Toma, Dr César E. Giraldo-Herrera, Dr Josh Fisher, Dr Marcel LaFlamme, Dr Magda Crăciun and Dr Caitríona Ní Laoire.

While the world was gripped by the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, I had a haven, immense support and lots of motivation from my partner, Magda, to turn the thesis into a book. More importantly, despite her heavy schedule and intellectually hectic agenda, she put time aside for my book. Her countless suggestions, comments and feedback that she has given to me has sharpened this book and made it infinitely better. Magda's encouragement was seconded by the success of other INTEGRIM colleagues who won previous book IMISCOE Competitive calls. I am, therefore, thankful to the IMISCOE-Springer Editorial committee for awarding me the second prize of the 2020 round of book proposals. My gratitude extends to the IMISCOE independent reviewers whose comments and feedback have made this book substantially better. And I hope that they will be proud to see this title published alongside others within the esteemed IMISCOE-Springer Research Series of publications.

The CODA of this book embodies the Nightworker Charter, in Chap. 10. My work, including this chapter, has improved through exchanges and discussions at online events held by IMISCOE members, Nighttime.org, International Night Studies Network and Migrant Voice, UK. Special thanks for their contribution to Chap. 10 go to Professor Will Straw, Dr Andreina Seijas, Dr Michael Fichman and Tara Duvivier; thank you also to Nazek Ramadan, Anne Stoltennerg, Judith Vonberg and Daniel Nelson, for their input and being the perfect companions in laughter and support when social life has been restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, I thank my dear friend Dr Carmel Chiu Sutcliffe for exerting herself to proofread the manuscript and for her constant support and faith that this work would turn into a book one night.

The writing of this book has been made possible with the financial support from PRECNIGHTS, a project that explores precarity in women migrant nightworkers in Ireland. Funded under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) 2022–2024. Grant No: 101063938.

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Abbreviations

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A8	2004 EU enlargement wave includes eight countries: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia
BAME	Black and Asian Minority Ethnic
Brexit	Negotiation process of Britain exiting the European Union
CoL	Corporation of London
COVID-19 / SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
EU	European Union
HMO	Houses in Multiple Occupation
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLW	London Living Wage
NHS	National Health Service
NTE	Night-Time Economy
NYC	New York City
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
ONS	Office for National Statistics, UK
SMTA	Spitalfields Market Tenants’ Association
SSEES	School of Slavonic and East European Studies
TfL	Transport for London
UCL	University College London
UK	United Kingdom
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization

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The original version of the book has been revised. A correction to this book can be found at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36186-9_11

Chapter 1
Introduction: Invisible Migrants

1.1 On Route to New Spitalfields Night Market

At the beginning of 2015, I lived in rented accommodation in Surbiton, South-West London, in what is called a house of multiple occupation (HMO). This was a derelict, overcrowded, yet highly priced house in which 11 women and men (five Bulgarians, a Brazilian, an Iraqi, an Iranian, an Irish man and his English girlfriend, and me) lodged in six rooms. These first or second-generation migrants worked in manual, low-paying jobs on rates that paid less than the London Living Wage[1]—jobs that no local would take up. I shared a room with a British-Iranian who became a night bus driver that year. When he arrived from his days shift, I would be ready to leave the house for the nightshift. The landlords were second-generation Iranian migrants. My co-tenants often complained that the landlords had made no refurbishments since they took over from the previous English landlord. The place reeked of dirty dishes, unclean cupboards, and oil pans on the cooker. The floors would not see a broom or vacuum cleaner for weeks in a row, and the toilets were falling apart. Despite the poor condition of the building, lack of maintenance, and not having control over who was living there from one month to another, the landlords collected their full rent in cash, monthly. Tenants who could not stomach it would leave after 1 month without giving notice, leaving behind their deposit instead of paying the month's rent. Many, however, stayed in this house for years, including my Iranian roommate.

[1] London Living Wage Foundation promotes real Living Wage based on the cost of living and is voluntarily paid by nearly 7000 U.K. employers who believe a hard day's work deserves a fair day's pay. Online at: https://www.livingwage.org.uk

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J.-C. MacQuarie, *Invisible Migrant Nightworkers in 24/7 London*, IMISCOE Research Series, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36186-9_1

Vignette №1
30th January 2015

Day Sleeping Time: 4.5 hour
Night shift Duration: 0 hour–I missed the nightshift
Commuting time: Trip cancelled due to abuse from a replacement bus driver

As I was about to enter the Surbiton train station, I read this sign: 'Due to rail works, replacement buses are in operation from Surbiton station'. I got nervous because this would mean delays in my commute. The departure time on the electronic board showed 23:00. I waited until my watch showed 23:03. The driver of the only coach parked gave no sign that he would soon stop his mobile phone conversation and move his vehicle towards us–the dozens of men waiting outside the back entrance to board the coach to Clapham Junction. After a couple more minutes, I got near the coach's front window and while the driver was still talking, pointed at my watch and shouted that he was late. I hoped that he would hear me through the coach's shut windows. He carried on with his phone conversation. I returned to the area where the temporary pick-up point was assigned. I saw the station's warden approaching the group. I complained to him that the coach driver was late. He told me that I should wait because he would come soon.

A few more minutes passed, and the coach slowly moved toward us would-be passengers. I was relieved, thinking that I should still be able to catch the last train from Clapham and then the last underground train on the Circle line from Stratford to arrive at Leyton, where I would continue walking for another 20 minutes to the market. I should arrive on time for my second nightshift, I calculated, despite the commute now being a two-hour journey one-way. The coach's front door opened slowly. As I tried to board, the bus driver began to verbally abuse me, slurring his foul words faster than I could catch what he was saying. He was angry with me for pointing out to him earlier that he was late to depart and 'How dare I do that to him!' I turned to the other passengers who were already seated, mostly males of different ethnicities.

The bus was silent except for the angry voice of the driver. Aggravated by his behaviour, I raised my voice to him, but sooner than I realised I stepped off the bus in anger. It was a mistake on my part. If I were to take a seat submissively, the driver would have probably stopped his rant and I could have reached the first leg of my journey. On the contrary, as soon as I stepped off the coach, he shut the door. I was left without transport because that was the last replacement coach to Clapham Junction.

Following this event, I reported it in writing to both the transport provider and the police, but to no avail. So, I gave up. During the peak hours between 6:30 am and 9:30 am, on this exact route, the trains were full to the brim with daily commuters, mostly white people travelling to The City of London (CoL) to work in the financial

district and other service industries. In retrospect, I wondered if this event would go unnoticed and unresolved if it were to happen during the day commute. Would the driver behave in the same abusive manner against daytime commuters and get away with it like he had with me? How much or little of it is reported to authorities? Do authorities ever follow up and resolve cases recorded at night? In London, hundreds of thousands of people travel every night to work the 'graveyard' shift. Yet, the municipal government, local authorities or employers seem not to care or intervene in any way to improve their living and commuting conditions, as if these nightworkers did not exist.

1.2 New Spitalfields

In the far east of London, not many ventured out at night unless they were approaching the New Spitalfields market. People like me, job seekers at the market or nightworkers heading for the big night market shed—their workplace, were the only ones walking in the shadows of the night. Except for the night buses that ran past every hour, the ghosted roads and walkways were dormant. As I approached the site on my first night, I left behind a large field used as a hockey and mini football stadium. Later I was to notice that they shut around 11 pm. A 10 minute walk away, the new 2012 London Olympic athletes' village stretched all the way to Stratford, connecting with the Westfield shopping mall. But what lay beyond the marshes where New Spitalfields was located, seemed far from sight. On that first night and the many others that followed, the rest of London seemed a world away from the floodlit market hall.

New Spitalfields occupies 31 acres of land that is colloquially called Hackney Marshes, where Huguenot refugees settled en masse in the seventeenth century. It is strategically placed with access to the M11 motorway linking through the north circular to East Anglia. This strategic location provides access to both grocers and catering businesses who distribute and supply produce to all of the 32 London boroughs and throughout the U.K. On each side of the main gate of New Spitalfields, there are signs lit in blue laser that read: 'Corporation of London | Spitalfields' and 'New Spitalfields Market | The largest market in the U.K. Sourcing local produce'. Based on the number of 40-ton trucks that enter every day and night from Sunday through to Saturday, New Spitalfields Market traders from over 100 countries doing import-export of fruits and vegetables, must be trading around 700,000 tons of produce year round (Taylor, 2011).

Just after midnight, six nights a week, the gates open to the public and wholesale grocers. The long queue of white vans parked near the main gate, starts moving slowly like a snake vanishing behind the other side of the entrance. As I passed through the main gate, the car park was lit and quiet, but the roar of the market hall could be heard in the distance. The lights were out in the buildings only occupied during daytime hours by the CoL administrative offices and staff. Behind them, another set of warehouses were alight and filled with workers packing sandwiches

and catering companies trading frozen produce. The main market hall is a giant metallic shed that hosts 105 stands and over 115 businesses. CoL divides large stands into two or three smaller ones to sublet them to new tenants or existing firms which decide to expand. Inside the main hall, 16 delivery lanes connect each of the 17 gates of the main market hall. Each delivery lane or main aisle is edged in by two narrow footpaths for pedestrians. Frequent customers and traders buy and sell from midnight until daybreak. Usually, the only customers walking through the market in the early hours of dawn were local residents buying small quantities of produce, whilst forklifts zoom by loading and off-loading from lorries or vans parked around the main hall of New Spitalfields.

When I first entered the market, the main hall was alive and the beeping sounds of forklifts seemed to come from everywhere. I looked across the open plan work-floors and saw mounds of produce in crates stacked up to the roof and workers' bodies swerving through and in between these high towers. The workers were picking up the crates and laying them onto customers' pallets, which were arranged neatly in front of the shop floor. Forklifts were zooming up and down the main aisles with pallets of mangoes and pineapples from Peru, apples from New Zealand or the U.S., oranges and onions from Turkey or Germany, cassava from Brazil, yams from Africa, stacks of cucumbers from the Netherlands and strawberries from England. These pallets were being filled up in the nocturnal rhythm beats at an incessant pace as the night waned into dawn. I momentarily stepped off a footpath and felt an arm pulling me back and out of the way of a buzzing forklift that was reversing.

I spent 4–5 hours, walking up and down the floodlit market hall and the surrounding units and into five cafés in search of a job. Numerous times, my legs called for respite after another lengthy round of mapping out the market and chatting with whomever stopped to speak with me. I retreated into one of the cafés to warm up with some Turkish pizza (*lahmacun*) and hot coffee and tea. After my first night, I returned everynight for 2 weeks in search of a job. During these nights I came to prefer Star Café. The café manager was Kurdish-Turkish and Eastern European women worked there, so it was a chance to chat with other Romanians or in Turkish with the manger. Star Café became the place where I regularly engaged in the art of small talk, over pizza and many glasses of Turkish tea. Eventually, after these nocturnal visits to the market, I did find a job at New Spitalfields.

1.3 Ethnicisation of Work at New Spitalfields

On cold February nights, I entered the main market hall through gate nine to get to my first workplace. Heart FM radio was on at the English-owned stall opposite the Two Peaches, a family-owned Bangladeshi store with five staff where I worked in my first month at New Spitalfields. My nightshifts started at 1 am. The commuting time from South to East London should have been a 3 hour and 20 minute return trip door to door—long but manageable, I thought at first. Yet, I missed my second nightshift. My employer, a Bangladeshi trader, gave me a second chance to continue

my trial period. After that incident, I planned my long, night commute more carefully and began searching for accommodation in East London to be nearer to the night market. By late February, I was working at another company, FruitVeg, a company owned by a Turkish trader. At this firm, I worked the 'graveyard' shift for another 5 months. All over the market, loaders carried tons of produce on their bodies, forklift drivers transported thousands of pallets and women servers walked thousands of miles on foot between the café and market stands, lorries or customers' vans parked throughout the market. Out of the 115 stands under the glass shed roof of the market, more than half of the tenants were foreign-born traders, as the director of City of London markets confirmed (Taylor, 2011). In turn, they hired migrants for the night by night running of their businesses. In the floodlit aisles of the market, porters from Bangladesh and Pakistan, salespeople from Cyprus and Turkey and café servers from Lithuania and Romania performed an exhausting, fruity labour, six nights per week, all year round.

New Spitalfields is an ethnically diverse market, and each firm or trading company has rigid hierarchical structures. Firstly, men from Turkey, Cyprus, Pakistan or Bangladesh occupied the higher positions as executives, in most cases owning their businesses, but also as workfloor managers and salesmen. These traders were often migrants, some naturalised in Britain, and with many coming from Turkey, Pakistan and China. They frequently employed men of similar ethnicity as themselves for the higher end of the labour hierarchy. The men at the top of the hierarchy not only had control over other people, but also over their own time (e.g., work patterns, sleep patterns) and decent working conditions (e.g., profit shares and/or a high pay). One level down the hierarchy, the workfloor manager had most of the same liberties and advantages as the owner, i.e., less pressure to run the business, control over their own sleep and others. Two levels down from the top, were the salesmen, foreman, checkmen and stock controllers. They had very limited English language skills, but were proficient in the business language of the firm they worked at and most often it was the same as the mother tongue of the management staff. Again, these positions were offered on a regular basis to workers who were ethnically the same as the workfloor managers, and the owner or executive. There were exceptions whereby men not ethnically related occupied higher positions because they had built trust with their employers over the years (e.g., Romanian or Pakistani males could work as checkmen at Turkish-owned firms). These men could also enjoy the freedom of roaming in the market freely, eating at the market café and sitting comfortably in the warmth without the worries of running the business, but still reported to their workfloor manager and the owner. The foreman was a level beneath them, but was able to shift between the role of overseeing the manual workers below or being a checkman if the nightshift was very busy. Whilst he enjoyed some of the above liberties, he was the liaison between the management, reporting to the higher-ups on his nightly drill sergeant duties. And he experienced similarly poor working conditions as the 'low-skilled' loaders below him. The workers at the lowest level had the least control over their working hours, break times to rest and eat, sick pay (or lack thereof) and annual leave. Additionally, manual workers, such as loaders and forklift drivers, who did not have ethnic ties to management were systematically held

horizontally, so to say, on this hierarchy without the opportunity to climb the organisational ladder. The bulk of those on the lowest level of the hierarchy were made up of ‘low-skilled’ male workers from Romania, Turkey and the Indian subcontinent.

The majority of the women at the market were from Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. They occupied the lowest positions in the auxiliary services as café servers. Across New Spitalfields, women ran up and down the aisles of the main market hall with hot drinks and food. They performed brain numbing duties, repeatedly having to deliver food and drinks to market workers who ordered by phone and then promptly return to the café to pick up the next order, all night long. Many of these women would be shouted and whistled at or ridiculed (men moved their hands in round circles, which was supposed to signal that the women had round bottoms). A few of the women worked as cashiers. Given that there were large amounts of cash involved in nightly transactions, cashier jobs were usually only given to direct family members of the business owners. Women who did become cashiers were hidden behind the small windows of porter cabins. On the whole, both unskilled female and male nightworkers at New Spitalfields stated that they lacked the skills that they needed (e.g., English language proficiency) to work for and with people of other ethnicities and nationalities. This also restricted how active they were in seeking work elsewhere.

1.4 Half-Rejected, Half-Permitted Migrant Workers

Migrant workers have long been a ‘regrettable necessity’ for the economic growth of modern capitalist societies (Berger & Mohr, 2010; Castles, 1984, p. 40; Ruhs, 2013; Ruhs & Anderson, 2010; Wallerstein, 1974). Those who have happened to settle permanently, like the ‘guestworkers’ in Germany or Switzerland who became the unwanted foreign workers regarded as ‘not very clean, rather untidy’ … but, on the other hand, ‘hardworking, and thrifty’ (Castles, 1984, p. 40) or the Irish navvy who built Britain, are nowadays largely ignored, despised or forgotten (Cowley, 2001). Thus, migrants turned ethnic minorities become further subject to ‘legal mechanisms (refusal of rights) … and informal practices (racism and discrimination)’ carried out by governments and the local population. These immigrants become half-rejected (for being a threat and denied access to social, cultural and political arenas) and half-tolerated (for supporting the economy) in the ‘recruiting countries’ (Castles, 1995, pp. 294–295). Put differently, to be disposable, yet indispensable is ‘the migrant’s paradox’ (Hall, 2021, pp. 1–217). Other scholars, inspired by Mezzadra and Nielson (2013), have expand the concept of differential inclusion (Segrave, 2019) to show how migrant workers use strategies that avoid the power that states and employers inflict onto them through exclusionary practices.

This book subscribes to the understanding that rejection and tolerance happen concomitantly. For analytical purposes, this paradoxical situation is dissected and broken down to expose how migrants simultaneously are rejected and tolerated. In common narratives about the experiences of migrant workers, the focus is often on

three main points, which are departure, work and return. The focus in this book, however, is on how the experience of work is fundamental to that of being a migrant worker. In the European Union (E.U.) and the U.K., on political, social and economic grounds, migrants are expected to take on, in precarious terms, 'unskilled labour' that most highly skilled migrants and locals would not accept (Holmes, 2013a, b, p. 187; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Ruhs, 2013; Ruhs & Anderson, 2010). In terms of British and European politics, the aims are to protect their national labour markets. Labour migration researchers acknowledge that precarious migrant workers in the E.U. and the U.K. experience abuse and suffering because of the draconic immigration tactics and 'the legal production of illegality' (Nicholas de Genova & Roy, 2020, p. 353; Garcés-Mascareñas, 2010; Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016a; Güell & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2020, 2021; Hall, 2021; Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016; van Heelsum et al., 2013). In Britain, their supposed (un) deservingness is justified by indexing them as being first and foremost 'law-breakers' without inalienable rights or rights that might later be earnt (Hall, 2017; Ratzmann & Sahraoui, 2021, p. 436). Secondly, it 'pre-emptively illegalise[s]' them on a large scale (De Genova, 2018, p. 17) through a border logic that 'distributes unfreedom through, illegality, sorting, and punishment' (Hall, 2021, p. 158). This foul, colonialist logic ultimately renders them 'invisible' until proven worthy of E.U., British (or any other) citizenship, i.e., they are placed on an undetermined probationary period decided by a 'racialised sorting' (Nicolas de Genova, n.d.; Hall, 2021, p. 154). Racialisation is underpinned by rigid 'border logics' via nationalist and 'whiteness' tropes, whereby migrants are in-between being welcome insiders or rejected outsiders and are always being watched by the state apparatus (Hall, 2021). Put differently, in terms of the contemporary British (and European) immigration landscape, these people live the migrant's paradox (Hall, 2021), in which they embody the tension of being 'half-in, half-out' in a society where their legal or residential status is under constant probation (Macarie, 2014). Thus, these migrants are 'neither here, not there' (Bojkov, 2004). This tension extends beyond migrant workers who have historically come to Britain from the former colonies (e.g., Caribbeaners, Pakistanis, Indians and the Irish), such as third-country nationals from Turkey (before the U.K. exited the E.U.[2]) who have a long history of accessing the U.K. labour market via business visas, as well as the citizens of the newly added A2 and A8 nations to the E.U.[3]

[2] Due to 2016 Brexit referendum, U.K. has exited the E.U. in 2020. Before that, Turkish migrants in the U.K. were classed as third-country nationals or not belonging to any of the 28 member states of the E.U.

[3] In 2004, the fifth enlargement of E.U. included a new wave of eight Central and Eastern European states, plus Malta and Cyprus. This expansion included Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary. In the scholarly literature and official documents these are often referred to as the A-8 countries (here A8). In the context of the 2007 E.U. accession process, Bulgaria and Romania are named A-2 countries (here A2).

1.4.1 Who Is Called a 'Migrant' Worker? Who Is Not and Why Not?

There is no widely agreed definition of what a migrant is (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021, p. 21). More specifically for the U.K., 'migrant worker' and its derivative 'migrant labourer' or 'seasonal worker' indicate a person migrating to another country whereby structural factors or limited opportunities pressures them to take up somewhat unfairly labelled 'low-skilled' work. Similarly, in the United States, 'migrant' or 'farmworker' is used to describe the Latin American workers doing 'knee-low' jobs i.e., harvesting on their knees, fruits for the American consumer (Holmes, 2013a, pp. 186–187). In this book, migrants are people from developing or lower income countries, within and outside of the E.U., who 'often prefer to travel in the direction opposite the capital, making use of existing networks of labour movement into Europe rather than seeking rights and prosperity at home' (Verstraete, 2010, p. 11). Seen in this light, freedom of movement for workers in Europe means that some move freely whilst others are 'forced to move around as migrants' (Verstraete, 2010, p. 94). These working migrants travel in response to the demand for low-skilled seasonal workers, and not for business or leisure. In other words, they practice a form of demand migration, whereby some kinds of labour are in higher demand than others.

This question, 'Who is a migrant?' and by the same token, 'Who is not and why not?'– only points at what a migrant is and not what it is like to be a migrant or take migrancy as a 'state of being' (King, 2020, p. 1; Verstraete, 2010). The co-workers in my study experience migration as this kind of forced movement in response to demands set by a complex system of transnational forces of globalisation, which involves movement of people and capital and not the opening opportunities for voluntary migration to all. Put differently, migrant workers migrate for survival, not leisure. For them, remittances sent to their families is the difference between sending children to school or not or being able to pay for complex surgeries or long-term health treatments in their home countries where education and healthcare systems have been brought to their knees by the neoliberal governments' lack of investments in public services and welfare. Romanians travelling to provide cheap labour in wealthy E.U. member states, the U.K., France, or Italy are all perceived as Roma or Gypsy, a term with more pejorative undertones, or Eastern European migrants. Both terms are troubling – unsettling for the former and problematic for the latter. On the one hand, non-Roma Romanians dislike being associated with the Roma minority from Romania, the latter being negatively perceived by the former in their home country (Mădroane, 2012). Besides, Roma ethnics live all over Europe, not just in Romania, or Eastern Europe. But by clustering all 'foreigners' into one broad cluster as migrants, these wealthy states invalidate, for example, the differences and uniqueness of Roma, who for millennia have been migrating as part of life. Instead, they are amalgamated into confusing categories of lower-class Roma / Gypsy / Romanian / Eastern European 'other'. As such, receiving states 'ignor[e] intra-ethnic differences and contestations' (Laoire, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, locals–born