

Movement, Crisis, and (Be)longing: Affect and Migrant Identity in Agnieszka Dale's Short Stories

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Članek preučuje, kako je pripadnost migrantov afektivno regulirana, preden postane predmet pravne izključitve v kratkih zgodbah Agnieszke Dale *Fox Season* (Sezona lisic), *A Happy Nation* (Srečen narod) in *What We Should Feel Now* (Kaj bi morali zdaj čutiti). Namesto da bi avtoričine pripovedi prikazovale spektakularne trenutke krize, sledijo tihemu prestrukturiranju domače intimnosti pod čustvenim pritiskom Britanije pred brexitom. Ugotovljeno je, da A. Dale uporablja otroštvo, gospodinske rutine in vsakdanje geste, da bi razkrila, kako migranti ponotranjijo nadzor na ravni afekta. Članek, ki se selektivno opira na teorijo čustvenega kroženja Sare Ahmed, koncept intimnih javnosti Lauren Berlant in razmišljanja Judith Butler o prekarnosti, dokazuje, da se pripadnost v teh zgodbah pojavlja kot anticipatorno čustveno delo in ne kot stabilno družbeno priznanje. S tem, ko Agnieszka Dale postavi v dialog s srednjeevropskimi/vzhodnoevropskimi razpravami, članek njeno prozo umesti v širše literarno raziskovanje krize kot afektivnega stanja.

This article examines how migrant belonging is regulated affectively before it becomes a matter of legal exclusion in Agnieszka Dale's short stories *Fox Season*, *A Happy Nation*, and *What We Should Feel Now*. Rather than depicting spectacular moments of crisis, Dale's narratives trace the quiet restructuring of domestic intimacy under the emotional pressure of pre-Brexit Britain. I argue that Dale uses childhood, household routines, and everyday gestures to reveal how migrants internalise surveillance at the level of affect. Drawing selectively on Sara Ahmed's theory of emotional circulation, Lauren Berlant's concept of intimate publics, and Judith Butler's reflections on precarity, the article demonstrates that belonging in these stories emerges as anticipatory emotional labour rather than stable social recognition. By placing Dale in dialogue with Central/Eastern European discussions, the article situates her prose within a broader literary exploration of crisis as an affective condition.

Ključne besede: migracija, kulturni nomadizem, afekt, pripadnost, Agnieszka Dale

Keywords: migration, cultural nomadism, affect, belonging, Agnieszka Dale

Introduction

This paper focuses on the emotional and ideological processes that sustain migration imaginaries over time. While migration scholarship has extensively examined how imaginaries shape aspiration and mobility (Appadurai 1996; Carling 2002; de Haas 2010; Salazar 2011), it has paid less attention to why certain visions of elsewhere — often framed as the pursuit of a better life — become emotionally durable and resistant to critique. The pursuit of a better life is often treated as a natural or self-evident motivation for migration. This paper approaches it instead as a socially produced horizon of desire, shaped by historically specific moral and political conditions. Migration unfolds not only across geographic space but within collectively sustained imaginaries that organize expectations of improvement and belonging. Ethnographic research shows how diasporic narratives operate within what scholars describe as the moral economy of migration (Sayad 2004; Vigh 2009), encouraging migrants to frame mobility as success even when their lived realities involve precarity or underemployment. These narratives circulate transnationally through affective economies of recognition and obligation (Ahmed 2004; Boccagni 2017), reinforcing shared expectations and sustaining attachment to the promise of life elsewhere.

Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Žižek's theory of ideology, this dynamic can be understood as a form of collective fantasy. Fantasy here does not imply simple misrecognition, but an affective structure that maintains desire in the face of contradictory experience. This perspective complements theories of socially shaped aspiration (Carling 2002; Appadurai 2013) and migration infrastructures (Xiang and Lindquist 2014) by highlighting the emotional and ideological investments that make the pursuit of improvement appear natural and necessary. Rather than casting migrants as naïve subjects of false consciousness, the analysis aligns with scholarship on agency and ambivalence (Cwerner 2001; Berlant 2011), showing how exceptionalist narratives function as protective strategies that allow individuals to imagine themselves as inhabiting spaces of possibility within unequal systems. Migration therefore appears not simply as movement from one place to another, but as an ongoing negotiation of desire, crisis, and belonging shaped by imaginaries of improvement that are politically consequential, morally regulated, and deeply affective.

The article explores how migrant belonging is managed at the emotional level before it enters the arena of political conflict. Public discussions tend to frame exclusion mainly as a question of law or borders. Agnieszka Dale's short stories shift attention to a different stage: the emotional pressures shaping migrant life within domestic space. Agnieszka Dale is a Polish-British writer whose collection *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (2017) explores

migration and everyday life in contemporary Britain.¹ Her narratives suggest that belonging becomes precarious long before institutional intervention. It is first negotiated through fear, anticipation, and emotional self-management embedded in everyday life. It may be argued that Dale represents migrant identity as a form of affective surveillance internalised by her characters. The stories do not centre on spectacular acts of xenophobia; instead, they depict the quiet modification of behaviour under the imagined gaze of others. Childhood in an adopted homeland, family intimacy, and routine gestures become sites where social hierarchies are rehearsed. Belonging becomes an emotional task, as migrants want to adjust themselves to be accepted within the host society.

This approach resonates with Central/Eastern European² discussions of relational identity and cultural nomadism developed so far in *Slavia Centralis*. Scholars writing in this context emphasise that belonging in contemporary literature emerges as a dynamic negotiation shaped by mobility, language, and emotional vulnerability. Marko Jesenšek links linguistic integration with affective inclusion, arguing that migration transforms not only communication but modes of affiliation (Jesenšek 2020: 21). Silvija Borovnik's concept of personal and cultural nomadism similarly frames identity as hybrid and emotionally mediated rather than territorially fixed (Borovnik 2023: 276–277). Reading Dale alongside these perspectives situates her work within a broader Central/Eastern European understanding of crisis as a condition that restructures intimacy.

Fox Season and Other Short Stories, which consists of 21 stories, was recognised by critics in the British Isles as an important contribution to the newly emerging field of literary responses to contemporary social changes connected with Brexit, referred to as “Brexlit” (Shaw 2021). Although Dale does not address the political context explicitly, it quickly becomes evident to the attentive reader that these seemingly simple stories form, to a large extent, a kind of anti-Brexit manifesto (Cieplińska 2025b). Review excerpts featured on the book's cover highlight the originality of the collection, the acuity of its observations, and the remarkable sensitivity with which the author conveys her emotions and reflections.

¹ Agnieszka Dale (née Surazyńska) is a Polish-born, London-based writer who has lived in the UK for over two decades (Bryla 2023: 175–76). She is the author of *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (London: Jantar Publishing, 2017).

² I use the term *Central/Eastern Europe* to indicate the complexity of regional categorization: geographical location and political divisions often refer to overlapping but not identical sets of countries. “Central” and “Eastern” Europe function as historically shaped labels used differently across sources (On the instability of the term and its political implications see Cieplińska (2025a: 151–163)).

Existing scholarship on Dale has emphasised identity, displacement, and the mental boundaries of migrant experience, particularly in the context of post-Brexit Britain. For instance, Isabel María Andrés-Cuevas reads *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* as a reflection on mental borders, the Polish experience in the UK, and the ways in which belonging and othering intersect in narrative form (Andrés-Cuevas 2024). Similarly, Martyna Bryla situates Dale's work within a broader field of Polish-British migration literature, highlighting the ambivalent dynamics of (non)belonging and how Polish migrant identity is negotiated affectively in prose alongside writers such as A.M. Bakalar and Wioletta Greg (Bryla 2023). These analyses highlight how Dale's characters grapple with displaced subjectivities and the instability of identity under conditions of mobility.

This article shifts the focus toward narrative form and affective structure. Rather than asking what the stories represent, the aim is to view how they produce a specific emotional logic. The theoretical framework is drawn selectively from Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, and Judith Butler. These concepts function as tools for close reading grounded in textual detail. The three short stories selected from the collection offer complementary perspectives on migrant experience and belonging. While *Fox Season* explores the formation of identity through childhood perception and affect, *A Happy Nation* shifts the focus to the encounter between domestic space and state bureaucracy, and *What We Should Feel Now* examines the internalisation of exclusion as a pervasive emotional condition.

Affect as Method: Surveillance, Intimacy, Precarity

Affect in Dale's fiction is not merely a theme but a way of seeing, revealing how migrant belonging is organized long before it appears as overt political struggle. Sara Ahmed argues that emotions circulate socially and attach themselves to bodies, shaping collective boundaries and distributing fear as an atmosphere rather than an individual feeling (Ahmed 2004: 191). Fear, in this sense, does not originate inside the subject; it is inherited as a shared emotional climate. Migrants are particularly vulnerable to circulating social anxieties, and Dale's characters move in response not to single moments but to persistent emotional atmospheres. They act with the sense that vulnerability is already built into the spaces they inhabit.

Lauren Berlant's concept of the intimate public sphere complicates the distinction between private and public life by showing how domestic spaces are permeated by political narratives of legitimacy (Berlant 2008: 4). For migrants, intimacy is never sealed off from public scrutiny. Everyday routines unfold under the pressure of imagined judgement, and even minor

gestures acquire social weight. In Dale's stories, kitchens, living rooms, and neighbourhood streets become zones where belonging is continuously rehearsed. Domestic life is not a refuge from politics but a site where political hierarchies are internalized and negotiated through affect.

Judith Butler's notion of precarity clarifies the uneven distribution of vulnerability that structures this condition (Butler 2004: 20). Migrant subjects inhabit heightened precarity because their security depends on unstable political moods and shifting regimes of recognition. Dale renders precarity primarily not as physical threat but as emotional instability. Her characters manage themselves in order to reduce visibility, organizing their lives around the avoidance of risk. Self-regulation becomes a form of protection, and emotional restraint functions as a strategy of survival within environments marked by uncertainty.

Taken together, these frameworks allow Dale's prose to be read as an exploration of affective surveillance: a system in which migrants monitor their own behaviour in anticipation of exclusion, while simultaneously confronting the dissonance between dreams of some other place imagined as a better life and the lived experience of disappointment, constraint, and emotional disorientation that unsettles those aspirations. In this tension, migration appears not only as movement toward possibility but as an affective collision between projected futures and present limitations, where hope persists alongside frustration and belonging is negotiated through the management of both desire and loss.

Migrant Childhood and Identity Formation in *Fox Season*

Fox Season stages belonging through the emotional life of a migrant family. The moment when Lola, the seven-year-old daughter of migrant parents growing up between Polish and British cultural frameworks, declares, "I don't want to be other. I want to be normal," (Dale 2017: 130) establishes the story's affective structure. The opposition between "other" and "normal" is never explained. Its meaning is assumed, already internalised. Dale refuses to provide an explicit scene of discrimination. Difference appears as a pre-existing emotional category. The absence of overt hostility forces the reader to confront belonging as anticipatory fear. Lola fears exclusion before exclusion takes place. Her language suggests that otherness is not an external label but an internal emotion. Fear attaches itself to her body as inherited atmosphere (Ahmed 2004: 191). She has learned vulnerability before understanding its cause.

Lola's innocent, yet "politically incorrect" question, referring to the worms her father has brought home in a jar, needed for a fishing trip: "Are

Polish worms better than English ones, Daddy?” (Dale 2017: 124) reframes geopolitical borders through a childlike biological metaphor, translating abstract national divisions into imagined differences inscribed in nature itself. Although the question arises from a logical attempt to classify the world, it places the parents in a moment of affective and ideological tension. What appears as sheer curiosity is immediately recognized by the adults as politically charged. According to Ahmed, the scene demonstrates how social anxieties attach themselves to ordinary language and circulate through intimate spaces (Ahmed 2004: 191). The parents hesitate, aware that even innocent comparisons may reproduce hierarchies they are trying to avoid. From the perspective of Žižek’s concept of ideology, the discomfort lies not in ignorance but in excessive knowledge: the adults know the comparison is absurd, yet they also recognize how easily language can reinforce distinctions. Butler’s notion of precarity clarifies why this moment carries such weight (Butler 2004: 20). Speech is already monitored in anticipation of misrecognition, and the family regulates itself before any external sanction occurs. The child’s question thus exposes an ideological fault line within domestic life, revealing how national difference is negotiated through the emotional policing of everyday speech and how belonging is sustained through constant vigilance over what may or may not be said.

The comparison (Polish or British worms being better) is deliberately absurd and provocative, yet narratively powerful. It exposes how the child’s attempt to comprehend belonging relies on simple analogies that promise stability in a world of shifting identities. Within the logic of the story, the worm becomes a miniature allegory of nationhood, revealing how political categories are absorbed into the intimate textures of perception and language. Childhood emerges here not as innocence but as a formative epistemological space in which national distinctions are questioned, embodied, and made to feel self-evident. Konrad’s (Lola’s father) reply: “Well, you know what my father used to say? ‘All worms speak the same language to the fish.’ He also told me a man should learn to wait for his fish.” (Dale 2017: 124), turns Lola’s comparison into a lesson. His reference to paternal wisdom situates belonging in inherited practices rather than national categories, transforming a potentially ideological dilemma into a neutral reflection on family values.

Emilia, the mother, stops feeding the foxes coming to her garden because she imagines how her neighbours might interpret the act. Their possible judgment gains real power, illustrating how social control works most effectively when it is anticipated rather than enforced. Otherising and judgment attached to ordinary activities turn into paranoid fears of being marked as a stranger.

The fox stands at the boundary between private care and public visibility. A small domestic ritual that once supported Emilia's sense of belonging is reinterpreted as suspicious when viewed through the imagined eyes of others. The scene reveals how fragile everyday practices are: their meaning depends less on intention than on how they might be read. A gesture of attachment can easily become a sign open to misinterpretation. The fox therefore becomes a narrative device that highlights the tension between interior life and public exposure, showing that belonging is shaped not only by emotional attachment to place but by constant adjustment to social expectations.

Emilia's withdrawal represents changing behaviour before an anticipated judgment takes place. The change shows that she wants to avoid misunderstanding and to remain acceptable within shared norms (Butler 2004: 20). Surveillance here functions less as an institution than as an atmosphere that encourages self-regulation before any direct intervention occurs. What disappears is not only the foxes but a small practice that once organized her emotional relationship to her surroundings. Through this moment, the story shows how migrant subjectivity is shaped by the fear of being read incorrectly. Ordinary habits are given up and daily life becomes ruled by control, restraint, and anxiety about stereotypes.

Bureaucratic Intervention in *A Happy Nation*

A Happy Nation relocates surveillance from the emotional pressure of neighbourhood scrutiny into the encounter between domestic space and state authority, staging a scene in which an immigration officer enters Krystyna Kowalska's home and converts domestic intimacy into an administrative checkpoint. The intervention does not rely on overt aggression; rather, its force lies in the quiet procedural certainty with which bureaucracy controls the private sphere, converting the kitchen — traditionally considered the heart of the home, filled with the smells of cooking and the place of shared meals — into a temporary office where her right to stay is scrutinized. Krystyna responds to the intrusion not with legal arguments or documents, but with the language of emotion. She insists that she is loved by neighbours and colleagues, presenting belonging as a matter of relationships rather than legal status. Her repeated use of the words "love/loved" ("But I still love it here, I feel loved, just loved by everyone: neighbours, colleagues, shopkeepers, and maybe that's why I've been refusing to leave"; Dale 2017: 67) functions as a response to institutional scrutiny. The rhythm of repetition contrasts bureaucratic logic with emotional attachment, suggesting that recognition through feeling is offered in place of formal proof.

Faced with a state apparatus that demands verification, Krystyna responds. These everyday moments do not bring relief but create a rhythm in which ordinary life continues. The narrator speaks as if to a close acquaintance who had dropped in for a cup of tea rather than allowing the tone to shift into a more bureaucratic one. She replaces the language of compliance with the language of connection, presenting belonging as emotional integration instead of formal legality. By referring to her own ancestors, she emphasizes that, as a result of dramatic historical movements, many Europeans do not belong entirely to a single nation but have multicultural roots:

Are you looking at this picture? My grandmother. Beautiful, wasn't she? She had no British blood in her, not even a drop. She only spoke Polish, except for a few Russian swear words, which can have an influence on the purity of one's blood, as you know. Her great-grandfather came from Vienna, so she could also be a little Austrian, German, Slovenian, Romanian, Jewish, or even Italian. (Dale 2017: 69)

Krystyna's refrain — "I am fine. I am always fine" — introduces a second mode of self-management in which calmness functions as a strategy of survival. The phrase also carries an ironic echo of British small talk, so different from Slavic cultural patterns which prefer more direct expressions of emotions. Within the scene of bureaucratic inspection, this culturally coded formula becomes overdetermined: what usually signals politeness now operates as a protective performance. Emotional composure appears not as temperament but as discipline. To display distress would risk confirming suspicion, and the narrative frames emotional control as a protective practice that preserves her intelligibility within a precarious system of judgment. Butler's notion of precarity clarifies this condition by showing how vulnerability is unevenly distributed and how subjects must regulate affect in order to remain recognizable within normative frames (Butler 2004: 20).

The officer remains affectively neutral; violence is procedural rather than spectacular: the threat lies in evaluation, not force. Belonging must be articulated in real time, under observation, and Krystyna's speech becomes an attempt to stabilize her position, effectively speaking herself into provisional legitimacy.

Quiet Hostility in *What We Should Feel Now*

The story avoids direct confrontation and instead builds a sustained atmosphere in which hostility never appears as a clear event but is felt as a constant emotional pressure shaping the narrator's perception. The recurring question — "Do you not like me here?" — moves through the narrative without attaching to a specific person. Is it an internal monologue or a dialogue with

an undefined, imagined interlocutor? Since no specific subject is identified, exclusion feels less like something done by others and more like an internal condition — anxiety that gradually becomes overwhelming. Hostility here has no clear source or logic; it works like a climate rather than a single event. The emotional tension of the story grows from this uncertainty, as the narrator shifts between suspicion and self-doubt, repeatedly expecting rejection without ever receiving a proof.

Against this background of anticipatory anxiety, the narrative inserts a series of banal details — rotting apples, household routines, carried out with mechanical continuity — that interrupt but never cancel the emotional undercurrent. These everyday moments do not bring relief but create a rhythm in which ordinary life continues alongside unresolved doubt. Uncertainty becomes part of repetition, and the story's rhythm grows from the tension between habit and hesitation. The title strengthens this dynamic by presenting emotion as a kind of obligation, suggesting that belonging is judged not only through behaviour but also through feeling in the “right” way. The narrator doubts not just her social position but her emotional responses, as if the wrong feeling could itself lead to exclusion. To feel too anxious, too distant, or not grateful enough becomes as risky as a social mistake. The story shows that belonging depends as much on emotional conformity as on visible participation.

Berlant's notion of the intimate public is particularly resonant here, as the narrator's repeated questioning performs an appeal to an imagined collective audience whose recognition is both urgently desired and perpetually deferred. Her address seeks confirmation from a public that remains silent, and this silence does not end the appeal but intensifies it, turning intimacy into echo. The lack of response becomes a message in itself, strengthening the narrator's sense that belonging must be repeatedly asked for rather than taken for granted. In this suspended exchange, her identity forms through anticipation: she lives not in clear inclusion or exclusion, but in the constant effort to read the emotional atmosphere around her. The story presents belonging as a condition shaped by waiting — waiting for recognition, waiting for correction, waiting for a sign that never fully comes — and portrays migrant identity as an ongoing emotional negotiation in spaces where certainty fades and attachment remains open and unresolved.

Dale and a Framework of Cultural Nomadism

Reading Dale through a Central/Eastern European critical framework reveals that her work participates in a broader regional discourse in which belonging is understood as relational, precarious, and mediated through

affect rather than being secured through stable categories of identity. Within the Slovenian context, expert opinion associated with *Slavia Centralis* and adjacent fields conceptualises migration not as a discrete event but as an ongoing condition that reorganises subjectivity at the level of language, emotion, and school education.

As Marko Jesenšek (2020: 14) observes, the study of contemporary literature must be situated within the broader framework of migration and globalization, drawing on theories of multiculturalism and interculturalism (Welsch 2001; Hofmann 2006; Žitnik Serafin 2008; Kozak 2010; Kovač 2011) that resonate with Central Europe's historical experience of cultural plurality (cf. Borovnik 2017).

Similarly, Silvija Borovnik characterizes migrant identity as structurally provisional, marked by vulnerability and by exposure to interpretive frameworks that remain outside the subject's control, emphasizing the fragility of recognition in transnational contexts (Borovnik 2023: 276–277). Mlačnik's interpretation of minor literature resonates with Borovnik's notion of cultural nomadism by framing identity as emerging from linguistic and cultural displacement. He argues that writing produced from in-between locations gives rise to subjects whose sense of belonging remains provisional and continually renegotiated. Minor literature can therefore be understood as a literary manifestation of cultural nomadism: a domain in which hybridity, movement, and emotional instability function as structural features of subjectivity rather than marginal exceptions (Mlačnik 2020; Borovnik 2023).

Such a perspective calls not only for continued scholarly inquiry but also for a reconfiguration of the contemporary literary canons so that they more adequately reflect transnational mobility, minority positions, and intercultural dialogue. The emphasis should shift toward updating reading frameworks, strengthening awareness of migrant inclusion, and foregrounding the intercultural dimension of literature produced under conditions of migration. The promotion of émigré and minority writing thus becomes an essential cultural task, one that expands and redefines the boundaries of national literatures.

In this context, the short stories of Agnieszka Dale exemplify the newest literary production shaped by migration and bear witness to the author's intercultural positioning. Written in English, they are readily accessible to an international readership; yet precisely for this reason they require critical recognition and consolidation within the Polish literary field. The absence of a Polish translation to date further underscores the urgency of actively promoting and integrating contemporary émigré writing as an integral component of an increasingly intercultural literary landscape.

Dale's characters live within this same instability, and the British setting of her stories does not separate them from Central/Eastern European

concerns. Instead, it makes those concerns visible from a diasporic perspective. Her narratives describe a shared emotional pattern of migration — anticipation, adjustment, endurance — in which belonging is always postponed and must be maintained through small, ongoing emotional efforts. The crisis her characters experience is not dramatic but atmospheric. It appears in small adjustments of tone, gesture, and self-presentation as they try to remain understandable within unfamiliar environments. In this sense, Dale's fiction frames migration as a condition of extended transition, where stability is imagined but rarely secured and where identity emerges through ongoing negotiation with institutional, linguistic, and affective pressures. By situating her work within this framework, we can read her stories not simply as accounts of British multiculturalism but as part of a regional archive of crisis that registers how mobility reshapes the emotional architecture of everyday life.

Conclusion

Across the three stories, belonging emerges less as a stable condition than as an ongoing emotional task through which subjects continually adjust themselves to imagined and real regimes of evaluation. Surveillance is experienced primarily not as an external imposition but as an internalized orientation toward visibility: the characters monitor gesture, tone, and emotional display in order to remain legible within social environments where recognition is never guaranteed. Dale's fiction ultimately suggests that crisis does not begin at the level of public conflict but takes shape within the textures of intimate life. It settles into small decisions, domestic habits, and quiet acts of self-adjustment that gradually reorganize ordinary experience. The threat her characters face is rarely dramatic; it persists instead as a background condition that turns belonging into something that must be continuously maintained.

In this light, precarity appears not only as economic vulnerability but as an emotional environment that shapes perception itself, encouraging subjects to anticipate judgment and align their behaviour in advance. Dale constructs a narrative architecture that reproduces this condition at the level of form, inviting readers to inhabit anticipation rather than observe it from a distance. Her prose lingers on hesitation, repetition, and suspended address, so that crisis is encountered not as an isolated event but as duration. By foregrounding atmosphere over confrontation and mood over plot, Dale situates crisis within emotions where belonging is permanently renegotiated. Her work extends a Central/Eastern European understanding of cultural nomadism — concerned with instability, transition, and fractured affiliation — into

the context of contemporary Britain, suggesting that migration does not transfer crisis from one location to another but reveals its shared emotional basis. Belonging under conditions of mobility is therefore not secured once and for all, but sustained through ongoing negotiation, where the effort to remain recognizable becomes inseparable from the effort to live in a reality structured by uncertainty.

Data Availability Statement

The article is based on data fully presented and discussed within the article itself; therefore, no additional data archiving is required.

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GIBANJE, KRIZA IN PRIPADNOST: AFEKT IN MIGRANTSKA IDENTITETA V KRATKIH ZGODBAH AGNIESZKE DALE

Članek obravnava, kako čustva in ideje ohranjajo migracijske imaginacije, pri čemer je poudarek na prepričanju, da migracije vodijo k boljšim življenjskim možnostim, ki jih razumemo kot izboljšanje materialnih razmer in tudi kot prizadevanje za osebno izpolnitev. Namesto da bi to težnjo obravnavali kot naravno ali samoumevno, jo obravnavamo

kot družbeno konstruirano obliko želje, ki jo oblikujejo specifične zgodovinske, moralne in politične okoliščine. Članek se opira na teorije ideologije in izpostavlja, da migracije podpirajo skupne fantazije, ki pomagajo ohranjati upanje, tudi ko migranti doživljajo sovražnost, zavrnitev in izolacijo. Kolektivna prepričanja in transnacionalne čustvene vezi igrajo ključno vlogo pri krepitvi teh pričakovanj, pri čemer mobilnost pogosto uokvirjajo kot obliko želenega uspeha.

Razprava se razvija na podlagi natančnega branja izbranih kratkih zgodb Agnieszke Dale, pisateljice poljskega rodu, ki živi v Londonu. Njeno delo migracije predstavlja kot čustveno stanje, ki se oblikuje, še preden postane vidno v političnem ali pravnem smislu. Njene zgodbe kažejo, kako se pripadnost v vsakdanjem življenju oblikuje skozi tesnobo, pričakovanje in samoregulacijo, zlasti v domačem prostoru. Migrantski liki pogosto prilagajajo svoje vedenje kot odziv na namišljeni pogled drugih ter se, namesto da bi se odzivali na neposredna dejanja izključevanja, vključujejo v t. i. afektivni nadzor. Članek se opira na raziskave Sare Ahmed, Lauren Berlant in Judith Butler ter prikazuje, kako čustva krožijo v družbi, kako širše politične sile prežemajo zasebno življenje in kako negotovost oblikuje vsakdanje prakse. Umešča se v kontekst razprav o kulturnem nomadizmu v srednji in vzhodni Evropi, pri čemer identiteto predstavlja kot fluidno, relacijsko in čustveno pogojeno. Migracije se tako ne kažejo le kot gibanje čez meje, temveč kot nenehno prizadevanje za iskanje boljših priložnosti, zaznamovano z negotovostjo in iskanjem stabilnosti.
