

# hinterland

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## BIRD TALK #2

### The diversity of narratives

June 1, 2023, 7pm @hinterland

**Amalia Barboza in conversation with Stefan Kutzenberger**

Stefan Kutzenberger and Amalia Barboza delve into the realm of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār's poetic masterpiece, *Conference of the Birds*. Drawing inspiration from their own travel books, *Kilometer Null* and *Brasilien am Main*, they engage in a fascinating discussion on the power of travel in fostering intercultural connections. Amalia Barboza is a sociologist, cultural scientist, and artist. Since 2019 she is professor of artistic research at the University of Art in Linz. Stefan Kutzenberger is an author, curator, literary scholar and lecturer at the Faculty of European and Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna.

The audience listened to an exploration that intertwines sociology, anthropology, and artistic research, as Amalia Barboza, takes them on a profoundly personal journey through Brazil in Frankfurt. Her travel book delves into the lives of migrants, revealing a tapestry of intercultural experiences that construct the very idea of home.

Meanwhile, Stefan Kutzenberger embarks on an extraordinary trek across the South American continent and the vast expanse of world literature in his book, *Kilometer Null*. Through the eyes of the eponymous character, we witness not one, but three deaths: as a Buddhist, an atheist, and a Christian. Kutzenberger skilfully weaves together the themes of travel and mortality, demonstrating how religious affiliations shift along the journey, ultimately transcending the mere "pleasantness" that supposedly awaits in the afterlife. While these two works share a common geographical backdrop and a fleeting meeting with Stefan Zweig (1881-1942), Barboza and Kutzenberger unravel three archetypal characteristics intrinsic to all literary and real-life journeys:

Firstly, the idealization of the destination, forever eluding the grasp of the protagonists as they navigate the meandering and unexpected paths that lie before them. In the end, the true essence of the journey lies not in reaching the predetermined goal, but in embracing the adventure itself. As Confucius once mused, "The journey is the reward."

Both authors also emphasize travel as a transformative space of encounters, where the characters undergo profound change, ultimately dissolving their former selves. This echoes the remarkable transformation experienced by the thirty birds in 'Aṭṭār's work—an allegory for the potential of travel to reshape and redefine our very essence.

Lastly, it is within the voices of others—be they sentient beings, inanimate objects, or the echoes of the past—that journeys find their meaning. These mysterious messages, initially incomprehensible, serve as beacons of wisdom and deep connection. As the threads of past and present interweave, these fragments form a literary tapestry that not only pays homage to 'Aṭṭār's work but also harkens back to the thought-provoking bird talk of Sama Maani.