

MIGRATION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: AN INTRODUCTION

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This special issue originated two years ago, during the Induction Month of the European Joint Doctorate MOVES (Migration and Modernity: Historical and Cultural Challenges; <http://projectmoves.eu>), a Horizon 2020 (MSCA ITN) project. Apart from round tables and presentations of individual research projects, the Induction Month programme included lectures and seminar discussions delivered and conducted by representatives of MOVES academic staff and international experts in migration and cultural studies. These lectures, organized in cooperation with the European Regional Development Fund Project KREAS (Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World), became the points of departure for the articles included in this issue, which also features a contribution by a doctoral candidate, illustrating the work of PhD researchers in the MOVES programme.

In the last decades, migration studies has become a rapidly growing interdisciplinary area. This special issue differs from a number of approaches and projects in this field by an emphasis on the close relationship between migration and intercultural communication. Instead of focusing on the economic, political, military, environmental or cultural causes of migration, the articles in this issue discuss its diverse effects on individuals, religious and cultural movements, nations and colonial empires in the long time span of modernity from the fifteenth century to the present. Assessing the effects of migration, the authors do not rely on systems theories and economic or sociological models, but

focus on the dynamic of intercultural exchange conditioned by or linked with migration. As a result, individuals, societies, cultures and even nations are seen as shaped by migrations, which significantly influences the understanding of individual, cultural and national identities.

The research methodology in this special issue can be contrasted with a recent approach heralded by Thomas Nail's book *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015). Nail's analysis of migration concentrates on the migrant as a "mobile social position" or a "spectrum" that individuals move into and out of under certain social conditions of mobility. Simultaneously, the migrant is seen as "a political concept that defines the conditions and agencies"¹ of modern migration. Whereas Nail's account of migration dynamics is based on an ontological approach, emphasizing the importance of motion as "a unique dimension of reality, irreducible to space or time,"² and modelled on hydrodynamic theories of flow, its turbulences ("junctions"³) and circulation producing partially closed social systems, the contributions to the present issue describe migration and related political and cultural phenomena (such as slavery, racism or notions of purity) as "interfacial" processes. In analogy with its use in physics, chemistry, chemical engineering and other sciences, the term describes the tension and reactions between different social and cultural environments, or, in a more precise wording, "symmetry breaking transitions induced by non-equilibrium constraints."⁴ These may include different kinds of transfer as well as catalytic processes. As a result, boundaries (or borders) are primarily not seen as "a process of social division,"⁵ but rather as "contact zones" of interfacial tension, cross-cultural exchanges, cultural translation, or the work of go-betweens and intermediaries.⁶

Individual articles focus on most principal phases of migration processes reflected also in the structure of the MOVES research. The first phase, which can be described as "pre-migration,"⁷ includes motivations for mobility and initial

¹ Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015) 8, 235.

² Thomas Nail, *Being and Motion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018) 37.

³ Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* 27.

⁴ Grégoire Nicolis and Ilya Prigogine, *Exploring Complexity: An Introduction* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1989) 29.

⁵ Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Border* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 2.

⁶ See the website of MOVES, <http://projectmoves.eu/moves-profile/research-methodology-and-approach/> (accessed 20 June 2021).

⁷ MOVES, <http://projectmoves.eu/moves-profile/research-methodology-and-approach/>.

reflections on the benefits and dangers of migration. As William O'Reilly's article "Trade in Strangers: Curiosity, Travel and the Recruitment of Migrants" shows, these do not just include the individuals, groups or communities deciding to migrate, but also mediators in the migration process, such as recruiters, traffickers, fellow villagers or townspeople and even relatives and friends who migrated earlier. Recruiters were raising curiosity in their clients, which, in combination with the desire of individual freedom "to improve and succeed," became one of the crucial incentives of modern migration. Thanks to the recruiters, travel and curiosity became "ontologically transgressive" and also "potentially revolutionary and life-changing." Seen in the Middle Ages as an exceptional activity, travel became "open to all [...] irrespective of class and means."

The other phases of migration processes include "encounters" between the migrants and the population of host country, "the actual meeting between cultures," and "transformations," that is, "social, economic and cultural changes resulting from migration."⁸ Peter Burschel's article on "Purity: The Emergence of a Cultural Code in Early Modern Europe" traces the development of this major religious and cultural value from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. It demonstrates that as a cultural code, purity is always a part of the relationship of "asymmetrically opposing terms"⁹ (purity – impurity), which "claim universality," but "seek to exclude reciprocal recognition." As a result, the discourse of purity always refers both to "identities" and "alterities." Apart from these, it helps to establish the notions of spatial and axiological order, boundaries in social, gender and cultural terms as well as the notions of "human" and "unhuman." After exploring the transformations of the discourse of purity during the Reformation (chiefly in Luther's sermons, but also in relation to "confessional and denominational violence"), Burschel focuses on the development in seventeenth-century Spain, where race and "purity of blood" start to determine the social and cultural position of Moslems and Jews converted to Christianity. This heralds the shift from early modern "genealogical racism" to "anthropological racism," which had been integrated by modern states as an effort "to detoxify the 'body politic'" and which represents an ultimate negation of the spiritual and secular values of "ethical purity."

While Peter Burschel focuses on the encounters with other cultures and religions within hegemonic Christian societies, Matthew Pratt Guterl's article

⁸ MOVES, <http://projectmoves.eu/moves-profile/research-methodology-and-approach/>.

⁹ Reinhart Kosseleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 155-91 (Chap. 10, "The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts").

“White Supremacy: American Style” traces the “dynamic of race” as it was shaped by the migrants themselves, namely “by the settler colonial experience.” The very process of American migration and colonization,

the nation’s drive westward was marked, at every step, by a determination to encode and control race and racialized bodies – and in particular by its protracted effort to eliminate or confine the indigenous peoples of the continent, to expand the slave trade west and also to limit it to the South, to recruit Asian labour while stripping it of any chance of citizenship, to calibrate the national origins of its white immigrant populations, and to micro-manage the location of black populations after slavery.

According to Guterl, this has profoundly influenced the development of US attitudes to migration from the Northwest Ordinance of 1790, through the expansion of slavery, genocidal “removals” of Native Americans and marginalization of Asian labourers, to the racialization of immigration policy in the 1920s, which meant the victory of ethnocentrism and eugenics, prioritizing “immigration from the so-called ‘best’ nations in Europe.” In the first half of the twentieth century, a direct connection between the US eugenics and “the Nazi politics of *Rassenhygiene*” is established and developed.¹⁰ Guterl analyses the principal role of an amateur scientist, Madison Grant, whose “blockbuster,” *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), was admired by Hitler. Guterl further argues that Grant and his followers – Earnest Sevier Cox, James K. Vardaman and Lothrop Stoddard – were responsible for the modern racialization of the US immigration strategy, which was revived in Donald Trump’s attempts to put through the RAISE Act and to promote “the thirty-foot high wall” on the US-Mexico border.

The following articles establish a link between the research of “encounters” and “transformations” and the last important field of migration research in MOVES, the study of “narratives,” namely the cultural representations of migration and migrants in fiction, propaganda, theatre and other media.

Clare Wallace’s article “The Camp and the Journey: Aesthetic Encounters with Forced Migration” compares *The Law of the Journey* (2017), an exhibition of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei based on his experience from refugee camps in 2015, an award-winning play entitled *The Jungle* (2017) by Joe Robertson and Joe Murphy, and a collectively created immersive performance *CAMPQ*, a part of

¹⁰ Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

the Prague Quadrennial theatre festival in 2019. These artworks and theatre events create zones of encounter with migration and migrants, where “stranger fetishism” can be dismantled, thus aiding the acceptance of strangers based on the understanding of the “processes of inclusion and exclusion, of incorporation and expulsion that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities.”¹¹ The artworks and events create specific environments of encounter, where “the capacity of the aesthetic to move our senses, to disrupt our perceptions as the basis of art’s political force, forms the point of departure for a number of recent critical conversations on art, migration, and displacement.” This also holds for what Mieke Bal has called “migratory aesthetics,” which attempts to “establish an active interface between the viewer and the artwork.” Here the attribute “migratory” refers “to the sensate traces of the movements of migration that characterize contemporary culture.” This “movement, once we notice its pervasiveness, is not an exceptional occurrence in an otherwise stable world, but a normal, generalized process in a world that cannot be grasped in terms of any given notion of stability.”¹² Wallace’s analyses focus on “the ways each of the selected works share a concern with forms of radical displacement, but create spaces of affective encounter that have strikingly differing implications for the emotional legibility of the refugee and the ethical interface between spectator/participant and the work.” The article succeeds in demonstrating both the advantages and the limitations of zones of affective encounters created by “migratory aesthetics.”

Zoheb Mashiur’s article, “‘A Very Entertaining Book’: The Ventriloquism of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Eyes of Asia*” discusses the narrativization of an important event of massive forced migration, the encounter of 1.4 million Indian sepoy and labourers with Europeans during their deployment on the battlefields of the First World War. As early as 1918, “the bard of the British Empire,” Rudyard Kipling, attempted to give voice to the voiceless, drawing from the censored letters of Indian soldiers in his collection of short stories *The Eyes of India*. As Mashiur shows, Kipling’s main objective was not to represent the actual encounter of Indian soldiers with Europe, but “to assert their loyalty and subservience to the British Empire.” Mashiur’s detailed analyses of the strategies of British censors and the short stories included in *The Eyes of India* demonstrate

¹¹ Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-coloniality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 8.

¹² Mieke Bal, “Lost in Space, Lost in the Library,” *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices between Migration and Art Making*, ed. Catherine M. Lord and Sam Durrant (Amsterdam: Brill/Rodopi, 2007) 23.

that “Kipling’s ventriloquized soldiers reveal little of the subaltern lives they mimicked, rather they open for us the opportunity to dissect the worries of the imperial master.”

The interesting case of narrativization of the outcome of the largest forced migration in modernity, the eighteenth-century rebellions of black slaves in the Caribbean (including the Haitian Revolution of 1789), is discussed in the article “Slavery and Liberation Observed from the Margins of the Atlantic: Reflection of Overseas Colonization in *The Book of Joseph* (1783-1784),” by Markéta Křížová. Despite the scarcity of references to slavery in early modern Czech literature, the news of eighteenth-century slave rebellions along with the *Encyclopédie*, where Louis de Jaucourt “argued against the legitimacy of slavery in the strongest terms,” found a powerful resonance in a discourse of political and cultural liberation presented in the German and Czech version of *The Book of Joseph* (*Das Buch Joseph, Kniha Josefova*). The repudiation of slavery and the articulation of the desire of political liberty in this didactic work intended to popularize the reforms of Enlightenment absolutism, embodied by the Emperor Joseph II, transcend the limits of the Enlightenment propaganda, and initiate a radical discourse of Czech national emancipation.

The last article in this issue, Mirka Horová’s “Revisiting the Golden Age: Brexit, Migration and the Rhetoric of National Identity,” demonstrates the populist use of the narrative of migration from the EU in Brexit propaganda. It demonstrates that the success of the pro-Leave campaign depended on raising people’s fears “about housing shortages, austerity and cultural change,” using these fears in building up strong nationalist sentiments based on xenophobia, representing Britain – and England in particular – as beleaguered by migrant hordes. Horová also shows how the reminiscences of earlier xenophobic campaigns, for instance the “rivers of blood” speech of the Tory MP Enoch Powell against the “Windrush” migrants from the Caribbean, resonated in the recent anti-migration propaganda. While the pitfalls of the Brexit agreement, including the problems of the Northern Ireland Protocol, loom large in the post-Brexit crisis, it has become clear that the “Golden Age” promised by the pro-Leave propaganda is a mere illusion fabricated out of the myths of early modern England and the British Empire. Regrettably, the Brexit campaign epitomizes the use of anti-migration sentiment and rhetoric similar to those deployed by numerous populist regimes within and outside the EU.

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