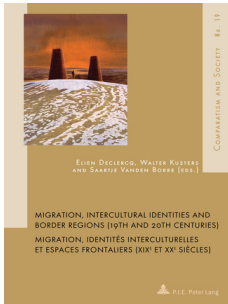


ELIEN DECLERCQ, WALTER KUSTERS and SAARTJE VANDEN BORRE (eds.) (2012): *Migration, Intercultural Identities and Border Regions (19th and 20th centuries). Migration, identités interculturelles et espaces frontaliers (XIX^e et XX^e siècles). Comparatism and Society Vol. 19, P.I.E. Peter Lang S.A., Brussels, 294 pp.*



The reader can expect a journey around the world when opening up this study volume about the conference held in 2010 between international historians and literary scholars. Not least because background sites for the research (amongst others, Argentina, Belgium, South Korea, the United States, micro-regions of France) are located in the most varied geographic space in order to present a social phenomena associated with immigration. Different cultures and social groups are affected by the studies of geographical mobility presented thus new points of view are constantly evolving. The diversity of research approaches and intervals on a historical scales can also open up new dimensions. We receive glimpses from this diverse and rather complicated world, where different sites are increasingly heavily disturbed by migration.

The point of departure – attention to the importance of the term in migration research is drawn upon by

the professor of comparative literature at the University of Southern Denmark, Søren Frank in his theoretical studies – is the city of Kortrijk lying near the Belgian–French border in the Lille Euro–region. An institute related to the University of Leuven is located here (Centre for the History of Intercultural Relations - CHIR), whose researchers engage in areas of cultural history and education history besides historical and comparative literature. Migration is a priority topic of projects regarding the examination of intercultural relations (this also includes the examination of local social phenomena in the border town). By examining the impact of culture the goal is to achieve a better understanding of migration. The present volume has been created in this spirit.

The volume examining the migration characteristics of border areas and specific intercultural identities organises the work of researchers from various European countries into five thematic units, which were written in two languages (English and French) in keeping with the spirit of the research. However, the thematic classification of the chapters may seem uncertain. The buzzwords summoned to the titles of the chapters (Theory, Nation and Identity, Migration, Borders and Interculturality) do not in fact exclusively relate to the studies included in each chapter. Most studies can be related to more than one (or even almost all) of the topics, therefore their position in this book could even be switched based on their thematic

emphases.

The studies can generally be characterised by a post-structuralist approach. Research related to non-European locations, as well as works also dealing with migrants from overseas, are written in the manner of post-colonialism. In terms of methodology, their characteristics demonstrate deconstructionism. Positivistic terminology and analysis methods appear in the work of a historian and researcher at the University of Sheffield, Timothy Baycroft, who studied the century-old migration process on the border of Belgium and France in the light of statistical data.

The first chapter of the volume introduces theoretical questions on migration research. It is worth a brief presentation of how we can be introduced to the opinions of historians and critics concerning the effects of geographic mobility on culture through specific narratives.

The increasing number of Nobel Prize winners, especially writers with a migration background is a process particularly notable within the last two decades, but has also been a general tendency in the 20th century. Based on this result, the previously mentioned Søren Frank points out the superficiality of this assertion in his study. The intensification of migration in the 20th century and the transformation taking place in society is manifested in radical new definitions. Due to its complexity, the new literary style represents a higher level of abstraction, which does not only define writers with migrant

backgrounds; therefore these changes should be taken into account in the work of literary analysts.

In the study of Ian Grosvenor, historian and professor at the University of Birmingham – in accordance with his field of expertise – he examines the cultural integration of those with migrant backgrounds in the UK from the perspective of education history. Putting the period after the Second World War under the microscope he perceives prevailing mistakes in educational values. For example, the participation of students with migration backgrounds in the learning process has not been taken into account, or the curriculum did not address the issue of migration appropriately. He illustrates with examples explaining the false ideology appearing in auxiliary materials, the actual political practice and the role of museums and schools in disseminating migration processes.

The essay of Charles Bonnet, a Lyons University scientist, seeks to present what kind of role the works of the Maghreb authors had in the evolution of postcolonial discourse regarding Arab migration in the French public opinion and in the mostly nationalist (promoting assimilation or exclusive) interpretations of the 70s. French writers with North African roots are not only present as witnesses in this process but by revealing a change in the spatial and social framework of migration, linked identity-loss or the multidirectional interaction between power factors, they unfold a world where it is impossible to have the same

discourse prior to the breakup of the colonial system.

Nation and Identity - The suggestive title of the second chapter of the book is a concept-pair that has been interpreted in many possible ways, in fact, in the last few decades they have even been set up as antonyms. The latter interpretation certainly brings up the topic of migration, since the immigrant individual and community does not identify automatically with the culture of the host country, or carry all the identity-shaping elements that prevailed in an earlier environment. How to cope with this problem in different countries? This chapter provides insight through the studies included.

CHIR associate and Doctor of the history of education, Walter Kusters draws attention in his study to such shortcomings as the different reasons for ignorance in the presentation of migrants in educational materials in France, a country with a significant number of incomers. The reasons are sought in narratives which underline the definition of the French nation. The author analyses the sense of mission-orientation, which was given to the first nation-state by the French Revolution and the cultural impact of the colonial past of great powers. Are they capable of renewing the 21st century French State in this respect (as well)? The study aims to provide answers to this question.

The expiry of the concept of nation is a characteristic of the period between the two world wars. Matteo

Pretelli, historian at the University of Trieste who studies the nation's image of fascist Italy provides an addition to this process. He uses school books specifically written for immigrant Italian colonies as instruments. With regard to the system of concepts and methodology, the study is not so spectacular, but still worth revising. Not only can we learn about the fascist nation's image, but also about the characteristics of relations in the Mussolini regime of immigrants, whose rhetoric is also reflected in other dictatorships and can, unfortunately, be instructive in relation to domestic education on current political issues as well...

The relationship of nation and identity is captured by another point of view in the study of Lionel Picard of Burgundy. The author analyses the decades-old mission of a German monthly magazine *Grafschafter Bote*, which aimed at protecting the interests of those displaced after the Second World War, as well as of Germans (*Aussiedler*) who left their homelands - mainly from Silesia - during the years of state socialism. The journal represented a community-building force between relocated and resettled Germans, but also had an important role in their (inter-cultural) identity construction and re-integration. The newspaper was also designed to draw the attention of people in the mother country to the fate of those Germans, who had to live in another state stripped of their nationality rights.

During the interpretation of the

social impact of migration it may be an important issue to discover how national identity is shaped by crossing borders, being introduced to new cultures and even the by simple notion of being on the road. Studies collected in the third chapter with the title of 'migration' are written in this nature.

The story of a migrant's life - how many ways can we interpret reminiscence? Can it be used as a resource to better understand migration? After reading the study of a researcher on British history at the University of Copenhagen the answer to the last question is clearly yes. Through the memoirs of an Irishman in England, Peter Leese's study reveals that one's life story may enrich national picture of history, national perceptions and the general cultural impacts of migration with a number of elements and new viewpoints, in a way that the official historiography of the country does not, or only very superficially covers.

Florence Labaune-Demeule, of the Jean Moulin University in Lyon, attempts to explain migration and the (re)construction of a series of constantly evolving events that determine identity through interpretation of the works of V.S. Naipaul, Nobel Prize-winning writer. Naipaul was born in Trinidad and Tobago with roots in India and now lives in England. His work often portrays border areas 'affected' by migration. They are not so much representations of physical borders, they are rather tied to a certain state: the state of

"deidentification" during which migrants who leave their homeland to colonise elsewhere, suddenly find themselves in "no man's land". Fractures in the identity cannot be re-established, but those personality-fragments which were not lost can be sorted into another unity together with the newly gained parts - as the writer's example shows, it is even possible by a creative process.

How can literary works contribute to the establishment of a collective identity? Yves Quairiaux, associate history scientist at the Mariemont Museum aims to give an answer. The framework of the study is provided by the mass relocation of Flemish workers to Wallonia from the 19th to the 20th century. One of the social reactions to the mainly economically motivated migrants was antipathy from most of the Walloon population against the newly settled. Reflecting this, countless poems, satires and dramas were born that turned the two coexisting ethnic groups even further against each other. Literary works written in this spirit significantly shaped Flemish and Walloon role identities according to notions of distinct differences which still have a partial effect on national and ethnic character.

Diverse interpretations of borders are presented in the fourth chapter of the book. The writing of An Van Hecke of the University of Leuven is one of the most extraordinary parts of the volume. In a short story, the author analyses various expressive forms of space in a fictional location. How can we get insight to the intra-

and inter-relations and the separating effects of the border between Texan Hispanics and Mexicans? The reader can expect an interesting journey of theory and methodology along the Valley of the Rio Grande. This writing makes the every-day analysis methods of the famous Timothy Baycroft seem especially dry and less interesting, but of course, due to our scientific practice the latter is more comprehensive.

Stephen Joyce's writing presents another interesting slice of migration research and related border interpretations. The author obtained a PhD from the University of Bielefeld in americanistics for writing that describes the birth of a contact zone in South Korea around a military camp in the 1960s, through the memoirs of a man with a South-Korean mother and an American soldier as father. The border does not only prevail between Koreans and Americans, but also between white and black Americans living in the camp. It also points out the demoralisation of civil society that comes along with immigrants, and that multiculturalism is not necessarily a positive trait of society.

Chiara Bignamini-Verhoeven, researcher of Jean Moulin University in Lyon attempts to portray the sometimes multiple connections between language, identity and geographic boundaries through the analysis of the novel of *Bonheur d'occasion* (The tin flute) written by Gabrielle Roy, French-Canadian author. The storyline, that takes place in one of the poorest neighbourhoods

of Montreal during the Second World War, focuses on effects that guide the characters to cross social boundaries - which in many cases extend between neighbourhoods. The universal central element is language. Linguistic diversities categorise social conflicts and represent impossible boundaries to cross for the characters who also come into conflict with their own identity between two worlds.

The last chapter of the book is dedicated to multiculturalism. Silvana Mandolessi, visiting professor at the University of Leuven proves why and how irony becomes the fundamental characteristic of migration literature through a literary piece about migration. We got ourselves introduced to the work of the Argentinian author living in Paris merely out of curiosity, but the rich and extensive theoretical and methodological introduction appears to provide a great deal of valuable information to social scientists specialising in domestic migration.

The literary researcher Elien Declercq addresses issues of multiculturalism through an already discussed topic, the settlement of Flemish migrants in French-speaking areas. However, the focus of this study is not the earlier mentioned demarcation of identity. The author explores intercultural identity manifestations by analysing a number of couplets, popular in the second half of the 19th century. The deconstruction of the idea of a homogeneous national identity reveals itself through the art of tactical play between the conceptual

duality of “identification” and “removal” that appears in artificial songs, and is conducted in order to maintain mutual compliance between the ideas of maintaining memories of origin and the challenge of an intensive French assimilation.

A unique point of view on multiculturalism is the presentation of personal destinies. Élodie Gaden, a literary analyst from Stendhal University, Grenoble, undertakes an interesting attempt to approach certain aspects of inter-culturalism through the story of two French writers settled in Egypt. The study proves that the preservation of the witness identity linked to origins rather plays a role of mediation between the cultures, but by keeping a certain distance the identity of the person fails to integrate. The identification with a selected culture is such a segment multiculturalism that can bring a completely new point of view to discourses on migration issues.

The encounter of cultures can happen on several planes. One of these planes, that may be less obvious as a scientific medium but can still be a creative point of encounter, is the gambling table. The work of Céline Regnard, researcher at the University of Marseille explores the identity-forming role of gambling-life in 19th-20th century Marseille based for example on police report analyses. The focus of the analysis is placed on the intercultural environment created by the act of playing together, in which case the boundaries of social interaction are no longer necessarily between nations, but

between gamers and non-gamers.

After the brief tutorial it is worth mentioning that the volume is published as the 19th part of a series called *Comparatism and Society*. This interdisciplinary compilation of literature, arts, and social sciences does not only aim to work as a methodological arsenal, it also intends to build the widest possible link between scientists working in different universities with similar interests. This study volume is a worthy representation of intentions to cross linguistic, national and disciplinary boundaries.

MARGIT KŐSZEGI, GERGELY TAGAI

MONIKA SONNTAG (2013):
Grenzen überwinden durch Kultur?
Identitätskonstruktionen von
Kulturakteuren in europäischen
Grenzüäumen. Luxemburg-Studien,
Bd. 3, Peter Lang GmbH,
Frankfurt am Main, 277 pp.



Monika Sonntag's book was published as the third volume of the series “Luxembourg Studies” at the University of Luxembourg, by the internationally renowned Peter Lang Verlag, publishers of scientific works. The author finished her graduate studies at the Universities of Trier and Montreal taking up several disciplines simultaneously in geography, sociology