

In Permanent Transit

In Permanent Transit:
Discourses and Maps
of the Intercultural Experience

Edited by

Clara Sarmiento
with Sara Brusaca and Silvia Sousa

CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience is a transnational project by authors from Portugal, Brazil, Macao, Canada, the Netherlands and the United States of America, that voices a truly intercultural dialogue. This compilation of essays from multiple origins, both in geographical and academic terms, covers an unexpected collection of areas often ignored by mainstream academia. It also tries to build effective epistemological bridges between anthropology, historiography, and gender, cultural, communication, literary, media, legal, and translation studies. The various colleagues invited to participate in this project created an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of migrations, traffics, technologies, communication, regulations, the media, and numerous other intercultural processes, in the context of past and present times. This is why *In Permanent Transit* offers a convergence of perspectives, combining conceptual and empirical work by sociologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists, educators, lawyers, media specialists, and literary studies writers, in their shared attempt to understand the many shades of the intercultural experience.

In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience and its authors see the 'intercultural' as a movement, a journey, as a dynamic between cultures. Contemporary intercultural travel is indeed a global journey, a circumnavigation powered by the speed of new technologies. This concept of 'intercultural' underwrites all the comings and goings, the transmission and reception of information that are implicit in the communication, in the diversity and in the transit that the prefix 'inter' suggests, from the perverse intercultural dialogue of colonialism to the current cultural heteroglossia of the internet. This is why we examine the motivations, characteristics and regulations of cultural interactions in their perpetual movement, devoid of spatial or temporal borders, in a dangerous but stimulating indefinable of limits. Normative practices of modern research in the vast field of the Humanities do not privilege relations of permanence any longer, to the detriment of relations of movement, a perspective which changed as a result of the endless mobilities that travel the world today, constructed and mediated in multiple ways. As Stuart Hall (1994) states, the notions of belonging and homeland are now being reconceptualised in contexts of migration,

deterritorialization, diaspora, virtuality, digitalization, and other features of the globalised world. Thus, cultural identities are not fixed, but fluid; not given but performed.

In this way we cross the first great border to intercultural transit—the frontier created by the concept of culture itself—avoiding the commonplace notion of the intercultural as simply ‘us’ *versus* ‘them’, and steering clear of the fundamental error of an interculturalism that ignores the diversity and dynamism contained in its own definition. A book like this generates an interdisciplinary dialogue between fields that have traditionally ignored each other, because it is also intercultural at its source and subjects, not just in the objects that are examined. Because this book does not fear the alterity that, after all, it proposes to study. *In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience* functions as a sort of third space, to quote from Homi Bhabha (1999). A third space for hybridity, subversion, transgression. Hybridity—and cultural translation, which Bhabha regards as a synonym for hybridity—is politically subversive. Hybridity is the space where all binary divisions and antagonisms, typical for modernist political concepts, including the old opposition between theory and politics, do not work anymore. They don’t work in these pages either.

New research centres, modern universities and evolving polytechnics have promoted cultural relationships and dynamics otherwise unimaginable. Present day converging interests are evident in the expectations of both publishers and the reading public and in the relations of power that shape stereotypical academic life. These notions and expectations persistently transform the output of young researchers, to the extent that they tend to adapt their practices and creative capabilities to professional and economic pressures. However, many of those young researchers often respond to such pressures with their own strategies, innovations and subversions, and seldom do they remain passive within the process of incorporation in large scale political and academic systems. Networks and echoes emanating from the international academic community spread rapidly throughout the globe and their multiple forms of cultural interaction bring with them their own forms of manipulation and subversion of power. These actions carried out in the ‘peripheries’—and which are, in turn, central in the lives and experiences of individuals—can be designated and described, more or less metaphorically, as “borderzones” (Bruner, 1996: 157-79), “intersecting discursive fields” (Tsing, 1993), academic diasporas, or “spaces on the side of the road” (Stewart, 1996), all of them reflecting the dialogic nature of culture.

In the vast cultural diversity of this book, past and present, global and local, converge in the analysis of concepts and objects closely related to on-going political, economic, social and cultural transformations. Portuguese scientific research is also an area of intersections, of permanent cultural translation, that is, of reinterpretation, of repositioning of symbols and signs within existing hierarchies. In its critical readings, *In Permanent Transit* attempts to look beyond arbitrary meanings, favoring contextualized interpretations that, in their permanent uncertainty, are likely to produce new hypotheses, theories and explanations.

For the American feminist Judith Butler, the universal—here understood as a synonym of hegemony, a Gramscian combination of power and consent (Gramsci, 1971)—can only be conceptualized in articulation with its own peripheries, the aforementioned “borderzones”, “spaces on the side of the road” and other metaphors. Thus, what has been excluded from the concept of universality forces this same concept—from the outside, from the margins—to accept it and include it again, which can only happen when the concept itself has evolved enough to include its own excluded. This pressure eventually leads to the rearticulation of the current concept of universality and its power. To the process through which universality readmits its own excluded, Butler calls “translation”. Cultural translation—both as Butler’s “return of the excluded” and as Bhabha’s hybridity—is a major force of contemporary democracy, also in the academic field (Butler, 1996: 45-53; 2000).

Therefore, this book intends to be the place where the overlapping of cultures occurs, which is the characteristic of a site of cultural translation. This sort of cultural translation may work as that “return of the excluded”, pushing limits, bringing about epistemological changes and opening new spaces for free discussion and independent research. Because, for Bhabha, as well as for the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006; 2008), the potential for change is located at the peripheries. Peripheries marked by hybridity, where the ‘new arrivals’—‘new arrivals’ or ‘excluded’ like polytechnics and universities from those peripheries, like unconventional research groups, like young female academics, like this very book and so many of its contributors—are able to use subversion to undermine the strategies of the powerful, regardless of who they are.

When talking about the intercultural experience, it is tempting to talk on behalf of the ‘others’, but seldom do we grant a voice to those ‘others’ themselves. The authors collected in this book assume that they and their essays are those ‘others’, because of their nationality, gender, orientation, academic background and field of research. One must bear in mind that Derrida has shown how the construction of an identity is always based on

exclusion and that a violent hierarchy results of such dichotomous pairs, as in the binomials 'man/woman', 'white/black', 'colonizer/colonized', 'straight/gay', and nowadays also in 'science & technology/arts & humanities'. In most of the cases studied in this book, however, the second element of this binomial becomes the protagonist and obtains its long deserved scientific attention.

As one may conclude, the comparative approach necessary for any kind of intercultural analysis has moved away from an anthropological notion of single culture, towards a notion of cultures in the plural, in a permanent dialogue, movement and translation, as Clifford Geertz explains in *Local Knowledge*: "The hallmark of modern consciousness is its enormous multiplicity. For our time and forward, the image of a general orientation or perspective, growing out of humanistic or scientific studies, and shaping the direction of culture, is a chimera. (...) The conception of a 'new humanism', of forging some general 'the best that is being thought and said' ideology and working it into the curriculum, will then seem not merely implausible but utopian altogether. Possibly, indeed, a bit worrisome" (Geertz, 1993 [1983]: 70).

André Lefevere developed a theory of cultural grids, based on the works of Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of cultural capital, which explores the role and place of texts and discourses within a culture and the role they might play in another culture. Such a system would clearly show that texts undergo all kinds of variations in status both intertemporally and interculturally, and would help us to explain some of the contingencies of those changes (Bassnett; Lefevere, 1998). In the same path, Sherry Simon points out that those spaces that were once identified as universal (such as the great humanist tradition, the canon of great books, the public space associated with democratic communication or the model of culture which sustained the ideal of citizenship) have now been exposed as being essentially expressive of the values of the white, European, middle-class male (Simon, 1996). This is why life stories, case studies and interviews with individuals of every age, education, gender, nationality and background must be considered as seriously valuable scientific materials, capable of generating new encompassing theories. The previously silenced voices of the non-white, the non-European, non-middle-class and non-male, and the narratives they produce, have to be given a new role and status, in a modern transnational cultural grid. Moreover, by listening to the narratives of everyday common life, read and deciphered in their own context, we learn about real experiences, needs, doubts, fears and requests. Because narratives of actual lives produced by human beings with a voice, a face and a name, create spaces of empathy, and consequently, projects of

action and research will be conducted in order to obtain tangible and useful results.

Therefore, local and global practices and knowledge—with their associated discursive productions—do not form a dichotomy. Instead, their correlation provides a stimulating dynamic tension, as the search for local concepts generates new concepts, which encourage the challenge of epistemological and phenomenological adaptation, under a genuinely interdisciplinary and intercultural perspective. Any approach must be located within the network of ideological and material contexts of a given region, which is always an evolving territory. In a post-colonial world, the intersections of past and present, of the global and the local, define the guidelines to explore the negotiation and evolution of concepts, as well as the material forces that influence individuals, communities, nations, and transnational arenas. These dynamics are more properly contextualized within the fields of knowledge and power (ever-changing and expanding fields) of the different ‘modernities’ and their specificities. Indeed, globalization—in its various aspects—has been localized and reinvented in a multitude of modernities, marked by a perception of the local and the global strongly anchored in unique contexts.

Post-colonialism is understood here as synonymous with the actual situation of former Western colonies, nowadays located somewhere between the colonial legacy, the attempt to reach a national consciousness and the policies of cultural conflict, in which different groups are trying simultaneously to set their own identities, always under the strong influence of global hegemonies. Post-colonial societies, according to Achille Mbembe, are composed of a plurality of spheres and arenas, each with its own logic, and yet likely to be interwoven with other logics, in a continuous improvisation and negotiation (Mbembe, 1992: 5). This constant need to negotiate and construct identity actually underlies life in most territories of the world, which communities express in a polyphony of narratives.

The concept of interculturalism explored in this *Permanent Transit* and the related idea of intercultural experience also develops from polyphonic narratives of dynamic tensions. This concept of interculturalism might be compared, without any (de)valuation or hierarchy, to the concept of multiculturalism, as a delimited, static space, within which different cultures cohabit in a circular movement. This multicultural space exists as a result of the intercultural movement and as such, shall also be discussed herein (Sarmiento, 2010: x)

According to Meer and Modood (2012), there are four ways in which conceptions of interculturalism are being positively contrasted with

multiculturalism. These are, first, as something greater than coexistence, interculturalism is allegedly more geared toward interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, that interculturalism is conceived as something less 'groupist' or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, that interculturalism is something more committed to a stronger sense of the whole, in terms of such things as societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal cultural practices, as part of the process of intercultural dialogue.

In Western Europe, multiculturalism brings to mind the conjunction of the terms 'immigration' and 'culture' that, in the specific Portuguese context, now nearly always invokes the large newly settled African, Brazilian, Chinese, and Eastern European populations. Conversely, usually in the United States of America and Canada, political terms such as multiculturalism are meant to include all groups marked by 'difference' and historic exclusion, such as women and sexual minorities (Young, 1990). This is due to the fact that citizenship regimes in European countries, like Portugal, include historical relationships with former colonial subjects that are distinct from the citizenship regimes of settler nations. Thus, post-colonial migrants to Britain, for instance, are clearly not historic minorities, but nor are they without historic claims upon Britain. Nevertheless, the term 'multiculturalism' in Europe came to mean, and now means throughout the English-speaking world and beyond, the political accommodation by the state and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. Though some groups resist having their claims to inclusion reduced to those of immigrants, the dominant meaning of multiculturalism in politics still relates to issues of identity and citizenship of post-immigration groups.

Contesting the myth of homogeneous and monocultural nation-states, the idea of interculturalism has more commonly featured in accounts of integration, as well as in discussions of migrant diversity in the arena of education. Until relatively recently, it has been less present in British discourse, because concepts of race relations, race equality and multiculturalism have been more prominent (Gundara; Jacobs, 2000). However, what the present formulation of interculturalism perhaps emphasizes is... communication. Indeed, communication is the defining characteristic and the central means through which "an intercultural approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different backgrounds" (Wood et al., 2006: 9). As the authors maintain, multiculturalism has been founded on

the belief in tolerance between cultures, but it is not always the case that multicultural places are open places. Interculturalism, on the other hand, entails openness—as a spatial logic of contact and dynamism—and, while openness in itself is not the guarantee of interculturalism, it provides the setting for its development (Wood et al., 2006: 7). And here, once again, the notions of dialogue and communication are fundamental.

Identity is partly shaped by recognition and sometimes by misrecognition, and so an individual or group can suffer real damage if society mirrors back a confining, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning some in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. This is therefore an illustration of how central dialogue and communication are for cultural diversity and social pluralism, precisely because they challenge people to compare and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their own cultures and ways of life. This depiction of interculturalism as facilitating an interactive and dynamic cultural exchange is concerned with the task of developing cohesive societies, by turning notions of singular identities into those of multiple ones. In building from a deep sharing of differences of culture and experience, interculturalism encourages the formation of interdependencies which structure identities that go beyond nations or simplified ethnicities (Booth, 2003: 432).

Again, an intercultural perspective can be positively contrasted against a multiculturalism that emphasises strong ethnic or cultural identities at the expense of wider cultural exchanges. Gagnon and Iacovino's (2007) positive argument states that the intercultural space is created and shared through participation, interaction, debate and common endeavour. This space is not culture-less but nor is it merely the one of the majority culture; while it has an inescapable historical character, it is always being remade and ought to be remade to include new groups. Interculturalism emphasises the interaction and participation of citizens in a common society, rather than cultural differences and different cultures existing next to each other without necessarily much contact or participative interaction. Interculturalism is therefore equivalent to mutual integration, understanding of each other's cultures, sharing them and finding common ground for dialogue and multimodal communication (Baldry; Thibault, 2006).

Under the section "Communication", the essay "Representations of Cultural Identities in Contemporary Audiovisual Narratives" discusses how cultural identities are shaped through globalization and migrations, under the lenses of a selection of contemporary audiovisual cultural products. The essay focuses on three renowned audiovisual narratives about the role of immigrants in Portuguese society over the last decades,

exploring the interrelation between the global phenomenon and its local dimensions, and debating the negotiation between different cultural identities and the consequent hybridization of contemporary Portugal.

In this contemporary globalized society, effective communication requires individuals who are able to master the necessary skills to deal with difference, as well as to accept and tolerate those who do not share the same language, history or culture. One of those key-skills for innovation and inclusiveness is creativity. Creativity here understood as freedom of mind, absence of prejudice, and communicative skills across cultures. Contemporary educators must also help students to become more creative, with the development and training of adequate competences and abilities in the classroom. “Creativity and Digital Spaces in the Intercultural Society” develops these principles by exploring the example of a set of case-studies held at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto.

Appadurai (2006) sees globalisation as a fluid and dynamic phenomenon linked to global migrations and to the dissemination of images, texts and subjectivities throughout a media-saturated environment, crisscrossed by streams which Appadurai calls “scapes”. Our time is definitely the refugee era, the era of people on the move, of mass migration. But while more and more people cross borders, they are also transforming their own experiences into a powerful heritage of resilience and self-knowledge. The media are witness to that phenomenon. Media artists have been rejecting labels in favor of proposals with transnational perspectives, where people with various cultural origins and multiple ethnicities converge. At the same time, scientists and scholars also explore the themes of displacement as movements of transnationalism, transculturalism, and dispersion. “Translation, Commodities, and Genres in Contemporary Cinema” tries to understand if the globalization of art brought us closer to recognizing the particularities and experiences of people in different parts of the world; how do historians and contemporary art critics decide what should global digital culture comprehend; what do the media representations of intercultural discourses tell us about the contingent nature of the notions of global identity.

In the modern Babel of global communication, translation studies have attained a major position and became a key area for the understanding of both contemporary and past cultural, literary, and linguistic phenomena. Translation studies constitute a crossroads of disciplines that blurs deep-seated distinctions between literary studies and cultural studies, literature and the sciences of language, philosophy and sociology, because the translation process extends well beyond a good command of languages. Competent translators are able to understand the close relationship

between language, culture, arts, conventions and discourse, in a constant process of problem solving and anticipation, adaptation and awareness.

In “Brazilian ‘*Eutropies*’: Translation as Cultural Empowerment”, ‘*eutropy*’ is posited as a conceptual frame for discussing the project of cultural empowerment through translation and heteroglossia set forth by successive and intertwined groups of Brazilian cultural agents from the 1920s to the 1980s, namely Oswald de Andrade’s *Antropofagia*, the theory and practice of ‘transcreation’ by the Neograndes group of poet-translators (Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari), and the musical trend of *tropicalismo*. Despite its euphoric gluttonous effort to use translation as a broad metaphor for upsetting hierarchical enforcement of identity and otherness, this ambition of a minority culture to lead the path towards a universal language, using technological resourcefulness and mass media codes, led to unattended frictions (entropies) between artistic production and several factors of reception. Such a polymorphous endeavor raises the crucial issue of bridging the gap between an elite and the needs of its economically struggling public, and the converse risks of exposing to mass consumption an art derived from selective cannibalism. Its results, nonetheless, crisscrossing the borders of authority and cultural identification, make forcible suggestions for resistance through cultural hybridity.

Cultural resistance to the impositions of globalization can also be found in the way local communities preserve and transmit their oral traditions, founding myths and ethical tales. “The Cultural Background in African Tales and Myths” tries to recognize, define and understand characteristics and elements of African folk tales, providing an intercultural approach to groups distant from the Western cultural matrix. The essay includes long passages of storytelling, that help us to explore the most typical animal characters and their cultural symbolism, as well as the ethics and the aesthetics of African tales and their richness as an educational tool, particularly in the transmission of precepts of moral and social cohesion.

The development and extension of the processes of mediatization and migration, which characterise globalized modernity, produce a considerable intensification of deterritorialization, understood as a proliferation of translocalized cultural experiences (Hernández, 2002). Deterritorialization, considered as a central feature of globalization, implies the growing presence of social forms of contact and involvement which go beyond the limits of a specific territory (Giddens, 1990). This takes individuals to a closer involvement with the external, which generates closeness in distance, and a relative distancing from what is close. Therefore, the

extension of the forms of deterritorialized social relation tends to generalize with the intensification of globalization, causing a profound transformation in the status of local environments.

John Berger's novel *Here Is Where We Meet* combines an experience of deterritorialization with an ekphrastic transit between literature and visual arts. The essay "John Berger's Lisbon in *Here Is Where We Meet*" approaches the way how the English writer sees Portugal, and particularly Lisbon, in his 2005 work. John Berger is not only a writer but also a painter, so his descriptions and narratives about Lisbon have a strong visual component. As a left-wing militant, Berger confesses to have an innate solidarity with the poor, and focus his interest on the underprivileged inhabitants of the city, avoiding everything that may sound as a tourist guide cliché about Lisbon. In *Here Is Where We Meet* there is a very personal view by an author who chooses to speak about places that are usually considered as little emblematic, but which, due to the reflections they provoke, acquire an unexpected relevance. John Berger composes a complex representation of Lisbon, its inhabitants, places, prosperity and decay, as a city half-way between Europe and Africa.

Apparently distant literary genres and their original territories also meet in "All the Boat is a Stage: Classical Tragedy Meets American Narrative", an essay about *Billy Budd, Sailor: An Inside Narrative*, by Herman Melville. Here, Melville rewrites the eternal and universal tragedy of good and evil at fight, recovering, in the 19th century America, the likewise eternal and universal spirit of classical tragedy. *Billy Budd*'s plot is staged inside a HMS man-of-war and, simultaneously, inside human soul, sailing through the seas and through the contradictions and incompatible instincts of mankind. Melville founds his tragedy on a new myth, recycled from the Ancients. A myth expresses the rules of conduct of a certain social or religious group: among the Greeks, the laws of destiny, honour, moderation and obedience to the Gods; in *Billy Budd*'s 19th century Britain, not only the laws of war and institutions, but also the laws of nature and purest human feelings.

Intercultural transits require a map drawn by disciplines that are seldom taken into account in a conservative approach to the notion of 'culture'. The section on "Regulations" is guided by those intercultural and cross-disciplinary maps. If culture is intimately related to the practices, regulations and values that structure life within a given society, then cultural and intercultural studies should also analyse how those conventions have been codified and put into practice as commonly accepted institutions. Depending on the complexity of those regulations, cultural analysis may focus both on ordinary everyday tacitly accepted

rules—the so-called ‘common-sense’—and on complex political, religious, economic, legal and philosophical systems, because all these ideological processes act at the subliminal and at the conscious level alike, and are the tools through which social identities are constructed. Law is ultimately the major system of social and cultural regulation, which offers multiple perspectives in the present field of intercultural studies, from the analyses of the political intervention of cooperative culture, to the history of the laws of slavery and their power over the fate of millions of human beings.

Within the domestic sphere, the laws of common sense and often of prejudice and gender stereotype pervade the issue of household labour and its sharing by couples. Household duties have been a privileged area for academic research in recent decades, as they represent an excellent field in which to observe how gender differentials have developed since women entered the paid labour market. However, despite the number of essays on this subject, the results advanced for the housework dynamics in bi-national partnerships have, so far, been scarce. As a means of partially overcoming this absence, “The Division of Household Labour among European Bi-National Couples” looks at the issue of gendered division of housework among European upper middle class bi-national (thus, intercultural) couples living in Lisbon, Portugal. A number of dimensions focusing on each spouse’s housework allocation were assessed on the basis of semi-structured interviews with fifteen couples: a) the nature of the tasks undertaken by each spouse; b) the amount of time devoted to household chores; c) the purchase of formal help services; and d) the perceptions of fairness in the distribution of household duties. Following a discussion of the empirical findings of each of these dimensions, the essay suggests certain lines of inquiry that may help to expand the research on this topic.

Another topic concerning cultural regulations worth expanding is cooperative culture, both in the Portuguese context and abroad. It became common sense to say that globalisation creates goods, promotes mass movement, and cultural homogenization. However, Pieterse (1994) claims that globalisation is also a multidimensional process comprehending a wide range of social, political and cultural practices. Thus, globalisation is an interdisciplinary cross-cultural process that entails structural hybridisation, and the emergence of new, mixed forms of negotiated cooperation and social and cultural organisation. “Cooperative Social Responsibility: An Intercultural Analysis” relates the notion of culture to the social regulations, principles and common practices that integrate the cooperative organisation and have legislative consecration. The analysis is based on the idea that cooperative associations should be considered as

regenerating elements on the overcoming of the current international recession, defined by a logic of business deprived of ethical elements, thus opposing an ethical code based on a close relationship with society and its problems. The cooperative association, due to its civic vocation, democratic character, and participative virtues sets itself, now more than ever, as the pioneer in the construction of a better world.

Conversely, slavery and justice are contradictory, mutually exclusive elements in the history of many cultures, to adapt the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his *Social Contract*. “Slavery, Intercultural Traffic and Labour in Portuguese Law” analyses the jurisdictional regimes of slaves and free persons and their evolution during the 18th and 19th centuries. The essay tries to understand if certain limitations that appeared on the jurisdictional regime can already be considered as a first step towards emancipation, as slaves are gradually—though very unsatisfactorily—seen as persons, instead of mere objects, entitled to some ‘faculties’, which still cannot be considered as rights. The purpose of this essay is also to reflect, in a jurisdictional and historical perspective, upon the possibility of free people being legitimately subjected to forced work and contract obligations, in the context of modern (more or less forced) delocalization of workers, a reality that might be seen as a renewed reification of human beings.

It comes as a result that the colonial and post-colonial world is a space of constant transit, a permanent contact zone, to quote from Boaventura Sousa Santos, a worldwide frontier where peripheral practices and knowledge are the first to be noticed, though seldom understood. Intercultural translation brings the aspects that each culture considers to be more central or relevant into the contact zone (Santos, 2006: 121). Identity, territory and discourse intersect and influence each other, and consequently different spaces and territories, as experienced or represented through images and narratives, are understood in the most diversified ways. Michel de Certeau states that space is activated through the rhetorical practices of those who travel through it, and each individual’s semiotic and discursive options privilege, transform and omit spatial elements, so that they might mean something, something else, or conversely nothing at all (1988 [1984]: 196-8).

Telling or writing a story invariably entails an interpretation, as selecting from a whole set of experiences which events and characters are worth emphasizing is in fact an act of interpretation by itself. Consequently, narratives are seldom mere mirror images of the reality experienced; instead they are ideologically mediated by the experiences, characters and events that each territory enables. But when the spatial and

temporal territory—like the colonial territory or the space and time of revolution, war and independence—is still mostly unknown, when it is an unstable space in permanent motion, with blurred cultural borders, when there are no previous ideological mediators, everything needs to be reorganized, re-presented, translated into an intelligible code.

Therefore, in intercultural contact zones, each cultural practice decides which aspects should be selected for translation. In every culture there are elements which are untranslatable into other cultures, or too vital to being exposed to the perils and doubts of a contact zone. The issue of what should or should not be translated is not limited to the selection criteria each practice or knowledge decides to adapt in the contact zone. Beyond active selectivity, there is something we may call passive selectivity, which consists of what has become unnamable in a given culture, due to long term severe oppression. These are deep seated silences, absences that cannot be fulfilled but shape the innermost practices and principles of a cultural identity (Santos, 2006: 121), such as slavery, racism, religious intolerance, colonial oppression or the subjugation of women.

The ample Portuguese colonial space, so varied and exotic in itself, is often represented as a mere adjuvant or antagonist in the dominant narrative of the quest for religious conversion, wealth and social promotion. Contact zones thus created are never truly hybrid, as everything that does not fit into this grand narrative has very little meaning for the actors on stage. All processes of silencing and production of non-existence—like the silencing of women, minorities, slaves or returnees—have contributed to the construction and strengthening of deep asymmetries between cultures, individuals, societies and genders, characteristic of colonialism and patriarchy. Because, and quoting again Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “cultures are monolytical only when seen from the outside or from a distance. When seen closer or from within, it is easy to understand that cultures are constituted by many and sometimes conflicting versions of that same culture” (2006: 121; my translation).

The section on “Transits” focuses on narratives that are gradually emerging from a centuries-old silence, and also on narratives that have been absent from history, to adapt once more the concepts developed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008: 11-43; 2006: 87-125). Emergent narratives grant a voice to subaltern groups such as women, colonized people, Jews, slaves, to all those ‘others’ history is slowly recognizing. But the narratives of absence are also to be heard as, beyond emergent voices, or maybe through (and because of) them, it is thus possible to access otherwise silenced narratives of private lives, personal experiences, intimate thoughts, of the everyday experience lived under dominant social

structures. This narrative of normality, this history of private life—often in times of little normality, full of public historical events—generates a source of vital information that complements official history and is absent from the canon of great narratives. It is then possible to understand the infinite diversity of human experience as well as the risk it faces of (due to the limits and exclusions imposed by strict areas of knowledge) wasting fundamental experience, i.e., of seeing as non-existent or impossible cultural experiences that are in fact available (the ‘absent’) or possible (the ‘emergent’) (Santos, 2008: 33).

However, if deprived of a careful critical analysis, the diversity of practices, knowledge and experiences that result from those narratives may generate a diffuse plurality of self-enclosed discourses and identities, devoid of any actual interaction. Once again, intercultural translation should foster communication, generate mutual intelligibilities between different worldviews, find convergent as well as divergent points, and share alternative concepts and epistemologies, so that distant (in both space and time) cultures may ultimately understand each other. Yet, there are cultural concepts that cannot be translated, examples of incommunicability and silences in communication, which are also a fundamental part of intercultural translation.

It is now evident that translation allows mutual intelligibility between the available and possible worldviews revealed by narratives of absence and emergence. Due to this inherent multiplicity of simultaneous voices, the process of intercultural translation does not consider any group of experiences neither as an exclusive totality nor as an homogeneous part. Different worldviews are analysed at different stages of the work of translation, both as totalities and parts, as they exist well beyond those totalities and parts. They allow us to see the subaltern both within and outside the relation of subalternity. When narratives of absence and emergence become widely known, the amount and diversity of available and possible experiences increases dramatically, because the work of translation creates transparency, coherence, and articulation in a world thus enriched with such multiplicity and heterogeneity (Santos, 2006: 114, 119).

Using as a springboard the role that Sephardic women of the Iberian Diasporas had before and after 1492/1497, “The Transformation of a Soul: How Beatriz de Luna Mendes Benveniste became Grácia Nási” follows the complex life story of Beatriz de Luna, later known as Beatriz Mendes Benveniste and, after her public and official return to Judaism, finally known as Grácia Nási. A closer look at the vicissitudes of this Portuguese crypto-Jewish woman will then reveal her everlasting contributions to the

Jewish cause, at times bridging the gap between Sephardism or Marranism and the other linguistic, ethnic, and/or racial branches of Judaism. Grácia Nási's forced transits from place to place were a constant struggle to gain the greatly desired civic and religious rights of *diasporic* Iberian Jews and crypto-Jews living in Europe as well as in the Ottoman Empire. These digressions through lands, countries, regions, nations, and empires brought Grácia Nási from an inquisitorial Iberia to northern Europe, mainly London and Antwerp, as well as to many Italian cities, city-states, dukedoms, and states, like Ferrara, Ancona, and the powerful Republic of Venice. However, despite the oftentimes adverse conditions, Grácia Nási at last reached her much-desired goal on Muslim soil where, under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire, she could finally unite the local Jewish communities, mainly in today's Greece, Turkey, Israel, and Palestine.

Another intricate religion-related transit is narrated in "Jesuit Schools and Missions in the Orient", which analyses several practices and strategies of teaching, preaching and conversion by Jesuit missionaries in India, China and Japan, during the 16th century. Jesuits became involved in the Portuguese imperial structure, carrying their missionary zeal across those Asian spaces and societies dominated by Iberian conquests and political treatises. There, Jesuits practised a peculiar policy of intercultural adaptation, which did not indicate unilateral submission or accommodation, but rather showed understanding and respect for dominant cultures. However, a comprehensive analysis of historical sources also confirms that the Jesuits' attentive descriptions of distant societies ultimately intended to refute local cultures in favour of Christian and European values.

Indonesia has been commonly considered one of the most improbable countries in Southeast Asia, due to its peculiar insular geography, but in particular to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the population. The living together of this heterogeneous population, spread over an enormous area, as citizens of one state is an effect of their common colonial history. The present Indonesia is the area which was, as the Netherlands East Indies, under formal Dutch rule in 1942, when the Japanese occupation began, followed in 1945 by Indonesia's declaration of independence. The Dutch colonial influence had for the various regions hugely diverging degrees of duration and intensity. A very small number had known colonial rule for over a century, accompanied by Christian missionary activity and the introduction of a school system. One of these regions was Minahasa, on the northern tip of the island of Sulawesi, formerly known as Celebes. There, the Dutch introduced, in the 19th century, the forced cultivation of coffee and other commercial products, enforced by a strict

and intricate administrative regime, which rested on the collaboration of indigenous leaders. The missions met with considerable success, so that at the end of the 19th century almost all inhabitants were Protestant or Catholic. School attendance among boys and girls was high, and Minahasa was at the end of the colonial period the region in the Netherlands East Indies with the highest degree of alphabetization. The familiarity of many Minahasans with the Dutch language, the neat lay-out of the villages according to instructions by the Dutch, the use of Western garments, all this conveyed the idea of a piece of Holland set in a tropical landscape. Many Minahasans served in the colonial apparatus, as soldiers or low-level functionaries, all over the archipelago. This region was often presented by the Dutch, both in the Indies and in Europe, as a proof of the efficiency and fairness of their so-called 'civilizing mission'. "Minahasa (North Sulawesi): The 'Success Story' of Dutch Colonialism in Indonesia" demonstrates that, nonetheless, there was also a great deal of pragmatism among the population involved, and that the acceptance of Western habits did not imply the disappearance of previous cultural patterns. An in-depth examination of Dutch colonial policy and practice shows that it was by no means as favourable and well-intended as a quick glance at colonial Minahasa might suggest.

Similarly ambiguous and heterogeneous, the Portuguese presence in the Americas was not solely one of men who had left the kingdom in search for opportunities and fortune. There were also many women who crossed the Atlantic, not always by their own freewill, to pursue their lives in the Brazilian Tropic. Women of all kinds: religious, prostitutes, alleged witches, family mothers and orphans. In a colony marked by a strong patriarchal system, at the same time, the frequent absence of the head of the family made women the ones responsible for raising the children, spreading religious beliefs, and teaching the first letters. Many of these women assumed a distinct social role, as responsible for the family business, and were consequently accused of threatening the conservative Christian order. Studying the documentation produced by colonial analysts and by the Inquisition's visits to the Portuguese America, "Women of the colony: Intercultural Experiences and Religion in Portuguese America" maps the presence of influent Jewish women in Brazil, and traces the profile of the role played by those women in the colonial society, while trying to perceive the continuity of the cultural heritage brought from Portugal and the adoption of new practices in the colonial daily life.

Memory is part of identity, both individual and collective, as it is also a key factor for the essential sense of continuity, coherence and (re)construction of an individual or a group. The main relevance of the narratives studied in

“Memories in transit between Portugal, Angola and Mozambique” does not lie in their credibility as documents in the positivist sense, because, and according to Sidney Chalhoub on literary fiction, this “searches for reality, interprets and tells true stories about society, but does not have to function as a glass window over, or as a mirror of, the social ‘matter’ represented” (2003: 92; my translation). It lies instead in the search for complex meanings, by analysing critically the discourses that guide the logic of memory in intercultural narratives and the practices that move retrospective representations of reality. “Memories in transit” studies the migratory movements born of African colonization and decolonization in three Portuguese novels: *As Naus* [The Ships] by António Lobo Antunes, *A Geração da Utopia* [The Generation of Utopia] by Pepetela, and *As Duas Sombras do Rio* [The Two Shades of the River] by João Paulo Borges Coelho. These narratives illustrate different ways of representing displacement, with particular attention to the concepts of memory, exile, e/immigrant, refugee, and returnee.

The essays here collected share cultures and reflect critically about diversity, as globalization and its subsequent effects have become part of the everyday experience. This is why—as we have seen—*In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience* covers subjects apparently as disparate as the problematic of gender in intercultural household management; literature as an intercultural journey; the social and cultural functions of cooperative law; cultural values and beliefs in African tales; religious (in)tolerance and diasporas; the perverse laws of slavery and colonialism; the media and the intercultural classroom; translation and multimodal narratives. As it becomes evident, *In Permanent Transit* is the outcome of a transnational project, by authors willing to join the intercultural dialogue, following new paths across old challenges. This *Intercultural Experience* implies a dynamic force among cultures, and this is the reason why this book questions the motivations, discourses, characteristics and rules of cultural interaction, in their perennial movement.

In Permanent Transit: Discourses and Maps of the Intercultural Experience is part of the research program of the Centre for Intercultural Studies (CEI) of the School of Accounting and Administration of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ISCAP). Detailed information regarding this research centre is available at: www.iscap.ipp.pt/~cei.

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Clara Sarmiento,
with Sara Brusaca and Sílvia Sousa
June 2012

PART I

COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER ONE

REPRESENTATIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES
IN CONTEMPORARY AUDIOVISUAL
NARRATIVES

GABRIELA BORGES

*Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity
which is already inside us as individuals,
but from a lack of wholeness which is 'filled' from
outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others.*
—Stuart Hall (1997)

Many contemporary artists have discussed the issue of cultural identities in the age of globalization. However, in Portugal there are artistic manifestations that exploit this issue from a very particular point of view, related to the changes that the country has undergone in recent years. As the debate of global phenomena always includes local dimensions, these audiovisual works reflect on the important role that immigrants have played in Portugal in recent years. This article proposes a debate on the negotiations between different cultural identities and their consequent hybridization in contemporary Portugal, through the analysis of the documentaries *Lisboetas*, by Sérgio Trefaut, that has won the award for best Portuguese film at the Indie Lisboa Festival in 2004; and the episode *Nós e os outros: Uma sociedade plural*, part of the documentary series *Portugal, um retrato social*, by António Barreto, directed by Joana Pontes and produced by the public service television RTP (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal) in 2007.

The concept of Cultural Identity

The concept of cultural identity has been the subject of serious analysis over the years in the field of cultural studies and many authors have proposed varying and complementary definitions. Manuel Castells

(2-3) sets the identity as the source of meaning and experience of people, understanding it as “the process of constructing meaning based on cultural attributes or a set of interrelated cultural attributes, which prevail over other forms of meaning”. There is no doubt that, from a sociological perspective, all identities are constructed. The primary issue raised by Castells (2007: 4) is “how, from what, by whom and for what” identities are constructed. In this sense, the author asserts that identities are constructed based on “history, geography, biology, reproductive and productive institutions, collective memory and through personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations”. Individuals, social groups and societies absorb and process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning according to “social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure and in their space/time framework”. The author’s hypothesis, in general terms, suggests that those who construct the collective identity, and for what, largely “determine the symbolic content of this identity, and its meaning for identifying with it or placing themselves outside of it”.

Other authors, in turn, have studied the concept of cultural identity from the notion of national identity and national cultures. Stuart Hall (2005) debates this matter and deconstructs the notion of a unified national culture that sustains the notion of cultural identity. The author asserts that national cultures are composed not only of cultural institutions, but also of symbols and representations, consisting of a discourse that constructs meanings that influence and organise the individuals’ actions. In this sense, Stuart Hall (2005: 91) suggests that national cultures should not be understood as if they were unified, but as constituents of a “discursive device that represents the difference as a unit or identity“. They have internal divisions and differences that are unified only through “the exercise of different forms of cultural power”.

The notions of ethnicity and race have been used to legitimise the unification of national cultures. In this sense, national cultures have been represented as the expression of the underlying culture of “one people”. Ethnicity, a term used to refer to the cultural characteristics that are shared by one people, is often used for this purpose. However, one can argue that it is not true as modern nations, for instance in Western Europe, have all hybrid cultures that are not composed of a single people, a single culture or ethnicity. Some authors argue that hybridism and syncretism, that is, the merger between different cultural traditions are a powerful creative source, producing new forms of culture that are much more appropriate to the late modernity than the old and contested identities from the past. Other authors, however, argue that the indeterminacy,