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Special Issue: Migration and Diaspora



Guest Editor's Foreword

Themistocles Gogas, Theophile Munyangemo, Neva Cebron

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Guest editors' foreword

In September 2013, the 13th Istanbul Biennial, titled *Mom, am I Barbarian?*, opened its gates. Organized by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) borrowed its peculiar title by a book of the Turkish author Lale Müldür. The exhibition aimed at the projection of the public space as a political forum. Moreover, it stressed emphasis upon the participation of artists from less privileged areas of the world, in order to project through their cultural products the existing subjectivities based upon contemporary binaries: insiders-outsiders; privileged-underprivileged; locals-foreigners; developed-underdeveloped.

It is quite interesting the use of the word 'barbarian' in the title of the exhibition. The Greek origins of this word refer to those people who use a language full of "bar-bar" a sound unfamiliar to Greeks. In the course of the centuries, the term took a totally different meaning, indicating the underdeveloped, the primitive, the brutal... In this context the term barbarian incorporated an additional meaning, indicating those people who do not share our values (and definitely of those who do not enjoy our material goods!). Westerners made an extensive use of the term 'barbarian' in particular during the long period of the colonial expansion, justifying through this the violation of even the most basic human rights of the colonised populations.

The post-war period of de-colonization brought in the West waves of immigrants, most of which derived from the former colonies. The end of the Cold War created another shift of people who moved (and are still moving) from the eastern parts of Europe to the wealthy countries of the European Union.

Looking backwards one may see the arrogance showed by the developed and wealthy nations in their contact with the poor who appeared one day at the frontier. It is quite explicit the excerpt of *The Age of the Empires* by E. Hobsbawm (1989, p. 32) in which he states the surprise of the 'locals' when confronted with the 'newcomers':

Even within countries or communities, the gap between the 'advanced' (who were also, in general, the wealthy) and the 'backward' (who were also, in general, the poor) was enormous, and dramatic, as the comfortable, civilized, assimilated Jewish middle classes and rich of western countries and central Europe were just about to discover when faced with the 2 ½ millions of their co-religionists who emigrated westwards from their east European ghettos. Could these barbarians really be the same people 'as ourselves'?

The above passages hinter a question: What is the prism through which the wealthy nations of the North or the West confront the South or the East? What might be the attitude that the locals confront the newcomers? What are the intervening factors that formulate the ideology around population movements? Finally, who is "barbarian" and who not?

We need to remind at this point that the migration and diasporic phenomena are connected to human nature. For the most part of human history people have moved

from place to place seeking shelter; evading a disaster or escaping persecutions; or merely looking for a better future. To a great extent, the history of the modern world has been formed within the context set by population movements. In particular, during the past two centuries migration and diaspora have resulted to numerous alterations as far as demographic changes or social formations are concerned. Additionally, the formation of contemporary identities is due to population movements during the period from the Industrial Revolution to nowadays.

The present issue of the Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication is devoted to the 5th Adriatic-Ionian International Conference that took place in Igoumenitsa, Greece, in October 3-5, 2013. Topic of the Conference was 'Migration and Diaspora', an international academic event that attracted several colleagues to deliver their papers. It has to be noted here that during the three days of the conference many stimulating discussions took place, giving the chance to all participants to share their ideas on the crucial issue of population movements. Given the fact that in nowadays Europe a strong discourse is held around migration the conference was timely set, providing the ground for the development of this discourse.

The journal hosts a number of papers presented at the conference, providing the ground for the development of a discourse over the issues of migration and diaspora. The papers cover a wide range of the thematic of the conference and offer various approaches through different paradigms.

The introductory article of this issue: 'Intercultural Skills, Culture and Literature at the University' by Aglaia Blioumi presents the acquisition of intercultural skills through the study of culture or literature. It examines the significance of a trilingual anthology in Greek, German and Turkish languages used at the Department of German Language and Literature in the University of Athens. Through the anthology students approach the culture and literature of 'the Other' being thus accustomed to an intercultural way of thinking.

One of the most delicate issues of current migration is that of Roma populations. Lambros Baltiotis, in his article: 'Balkan Roma immigrants in Greece: An initial approach to the traits of a migration flow' identifies the integration features of Roma in Greece. The study correlates the social integration of Roma groups in their country of origin and their settlement patterns in Greece.

There is a rapidly growing demand in Greek civil service as far as foreign languages are concerned. Kostas Garavelas and Anna Chita in their article: 'Foreign language in the workplace: linguistic requirements in the Greek public administration sector' present a research conducted in North-West Greece in several establishments of Greek civil service. They examine the required skills in foreign languages on behalf of civil servants both as communication tool and as a means for intercultural understanding.

An interesting topic is presented in the paper by Calliope Tsantali and Symeon Nikolidakis: 'A plan to present the Greeks abroad through the project method'. The potential of the Greek communities worldwide comes in contrast to the pessimist climate in Greece amidst crisis. The authors focus their approach in the project method used in education.

The diachronic importance of interpreting is approached in Theophile Munyangayo's paper: 'Working at cross-purposes in interpreting through doublespeaking'. The author analyses primary and secondary research data and provides an explanation why cross-cultural capabilities are imperative in an interpreter's work. Additionally the technique of doublespeaking is raised to become a necessary tool.

In an area that in the second decade of the 20th century became the terrain of minority suppression, nowadays researchers enjoy the freedom to study minority phenomena. In the northeastern coast of Adriatic Sea the coexistence of Italians, Slovenes and Croats was found at the eye of cyclone during the Mussolini's regime (1922 ff). The dramatic dimensions of the struggle for linguistic and cultural affirmation of the oppressed was so prevalent that influenced several literature works, most distinguished of which is the novel by Boris Pahor *"Here is forbidden to talk"*. Nearly a century later, Jadranka Cergol provides a different approach by examining the literature written by Slovenes living in Italy and literature written by Italians living in Slovenia and Croatia. In her article, titled 'An attempt at defining "minority" literature: A case study in the literary production of the Italian minority in Slovenia and Croatia and of the Slovenian minority in Italy' she examines the dimension of the so-called "minority literature" and views it as a supranational domain, pertinent to interculturalism.

Though more than forty years passed since the collapse of the military Junta in Athens (1974) the political discourse over this issue remains timely. Evagelia Kalerante presents the 'Discourse critical analysis of the Dictatorship educational policy (1967-1974) about the Greek-speaking education of the Greeks abroad'. The examination takes place through the analysis of the legislative texts of the period 1967-1974 focusing on the education policy. In particular the education of the Greeks living abroad becomes the main topic in the analysis of the author.

The last article, 'Mapping the Psychological Landscape of the Two Generations of Indian Diaspora in US through the Works of Jhumpa Lahiri' by Jagtar Kaur Chawla and Nidhi Nema provides an introduction to the Indian diasporic phenomenon. The numbers of the Indians living abroad (more than 30 million) consists by far the largest nation in diaspora. The authors make use of literature as the main paradigm of their research and through the works of Jhumpa Lahiri, a second generation UK-born Indian migrant in the US they shed light on the issues of culture and identity of the Indians living in the United States.

With this issue the *Journal of Languages, Translation and Intercultural Communication* enters its second year. Since the beginning of its publication the Journal received a considerable amount of papers for review and publication, an encouraging response to our initial ambitions. Following Journal's policy, all submitted papers passed through blind peer review and at present many papers are in the 'runway' towards publication.