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Introduction.

The aesthetics of migration: Reversals of marginality and the socio-political translation turn

by **Alessandra Rizzo** and **Karen Seago***

Migration, in its endless motion, surrounds and pervades almost all aspects of contemporary society. As has often been noted, the modern world is in a state of flux and turbulence. It is a system in which the circulation of people, resources and information follows multiple paths. (Papastergiadis, 2000:1)

Premise

Translation has imposed itself with determination as a condition for intercultural and linguistic exchanges among human beings living in distant parts of the globe for millennia. Not only has it contributed to the understanding of sociocultural structures, political systems, and technological and digital processes, but it has also encouraged our knowledge of the world – strengthening our awareness of marginalities, liminalities and otherness, and, certainly, widening our interlinguistic and intercultural, as well as translinguistic and transcultural horizons.

This volume ranges across disciplines and subjects in translation studies, critical migration and border studies, the visual and performing arts within aesthetic discourse, and also investigates collaborative research within and across these areas. Refugee and Migration Studies, and border studies, have grown as a concern of scholars and policy researchers in the 1980s, and have increasingly spread in combination with cutting edge approaches to translation as a tool for the (re)narration of marginal stories revealing hidden truths. Languages and cultures of diversity (Folaron, 2015; Sturge, 2007; Hermans, 2012) have emerged within and across popular culture and contemporary popular cultural forms (Holland, 2009; Díaz, 2009), ranging from films and documentaries, music and TV programmes, advertising, news texts and photos to specifically artistic experiences in the visual arts, such as in museums, installations and exhibitions, video and street art, and in the performing arts, such as theatrical performances and storytelling. Artistic constructions have turned to be multimodal mass-mediated forms of cultural production and consumption that permeate our social lives, while being the expression of cultural and social trends.

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Popular genres, audiovisual, multimodal and web-texts operating across a variety of platforms and spaces have been conceptualised as forms of creative interpretation, adaptation, de- and re-contextualization, transcreation, transculturation or localization (Rike 2013) within and across mainstream modes and cultures (Sturge 2006, 2007; Seago 2014; Serrell 1996). These new forms of representations that, we claim, are rooted in popular culture and are located within the dynamics of popular culture, reflect diversity, especially in multilingual and multicultural settings, where cultural contacts engender perception and engagement with difference and diversity, addressing contentious issues in often controversial language and visual representation. Recent research has highlighted the function of aesthetic discourse as a way of translating marginal voices and this interrogation of and engagement with borders, the centre and the periphery through art, has also attracted everyday citizens as never before. Of particular interest has been not the narration of why marginal realities exist or how immigration has taken place, but the representation of marginality in aesthetic forms in terms of how words and texts, images and visuals, within artistic platforms, are used in order to give shape and voice to marginal contexts (Stein and Stamselberg, 2014). This testifies to the fact that Europe is witnessing cultural innovation and undergoing developments, whose outcomes “will certainly bear the mark of the cultural heritage of millions of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America” (Bond, Bonsaver and Faloppa, 2015: 2). European culture has recently faced the challenge how to welcome different cultures from African and Asian countries, negotiate this presence and the possibility of transcultural growth and to flourish by exploiting its linguistic resources, its publishing and creative cultural industries.

The central concerns of this special issue on *Translating the Margin* are the relationship between marginality and migration, and the role of translation as a political tool within aesthetic discourse. In doing so, it makes the argument that if, on the one hand, the spaces and experiences of marginality provide a different lens through which it is possible to understand citizenship, on the other hand, the arts can contribute to reversing dominant representations of migration, and also showing the reasons why migrant communities have grown in spaces that have turned to be marginal spaces. Although migrants have learned how to construct their new lives by putting together cultural and linguistic elements belonging to both worlds (the homeland and host country), the liminal spaces they occupy as an imposed condition make them marginalised, not simply from a geo-physical perspective (which involves language and culture distance), but also in relation to economic and social factors. However, the other speaking from the border and the increase of migration has led to a flourish of narratives and artistic explorations of migrant experiences as never before.

1. The aesthetics of migration – a framework

As both a trans-historical and historical concept, migration involves the movement of people and cultural forms, but also of “goods, media products, art, and so on”, while functioning as a “catalyst not only of social encounters and change but also for the generation of new aesthetic and cultural phenomena and structures” (Moslund *et al.*, 2015: 1). These migratory movements have transformed the arts and cultures in the receiving communities and, at the same time, cultural and aesthetic changes in Europe have stimulated the process of reshaping migrant identities, marginal spaces and societies. Since the experiences of migration are an expression of mobility, they have found a niche in the margins of established cultures and have been neglected in mainstream frameworks. This is testified by the fact that there is “a long history in the social sciences of using the migrant experiences to explore marginal conditions” (Capetillo-Ponces and Kretsedemas, 2013: 1). As discussed by numerous theorists in the fields of migrant and border studies (Andersson, 2014; Griffiths, 2015; Sadowski-Smith, 2016), margins are border zones, but they are also contact zones within which migrants are forced to engage with a variety of borders and numerous forms of contact, be they linguistic, “ethno-cultural, geopolitical, gendered, sexualised, legal-juridical or racial” (Capetillo-Ponces and Kretsedemas, 2013: 1). These borders, which are continuously being redefined by acts of migration, change according to the migration processes which intervene at the levels of both the migrants – who are forced to renegotiate the relationship with their native culture and language – and the host country, which is also obliged to redefine its own cultural, economic and geopolitical border in relation to the migrants’ arrivals.

The contemporary phenomenon of migration has gained scholarly attention as a result of the unprecedented number of migratory influxes within European countries, as well as of the effects of globalisation that has encouraged the growth of new perspectives on multilingual societies. Within this framework, where the existence of migrant liminal spaces constructed by national identities and immigration policies is oppressing, marginalities have been viewed as transitional spaces that have the potential to shed light both on old and new cultural and societal parameters within which aesthetic discourse and translation work together to intervene as political devices for opening up new horizons for thought, social organisation and interaction.

The role of the arts has become predominant and has had an impact on the interpretation and valorization of new visual and textual narratives of migration that have emerged as expedients for the understanding of crucial contemporary issues in the areas of intercultural

communication, migration, multiculturalism and bilingualism within and outside European borders. The new artistic interventions within the construction of migration have contributed to making it possible that migrant subjectivities could have a voice and express their stories of border crossings through alternative media modes and genres. If these shifts as a consequence of migration in society have been a preoccupation in social and political research, on the other hand, the impact of migration on the arts and humanities has been remarkable in fields such as literature and non-fiction, the visual and performing arts (i.e. cinema, theatre, museums) and the Internet as well.

Recent studies on the growth and development of migration have been increasingly addressed across genres, modes and disciplines relating to the visual and performing arts (Bal, 2007; 2011; 2016; Demos, 2013; Berghahn and Sternberg, 2010/2014; Bond, Bonsaver, & Faloppa, 2015; Mazzara, 2015; 2016; Moslund, Ring Petersen and Schramm, 2015; Triulzi, 2016; Vecchi, 2016; Gatta, 2016; Zagaria, 2016; Ramsay, 2016), while drawing on already well established approaches to translation studies with regard to issues such as identity, migration, globalisation and travel (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Bauman, 1987; 2004; 2016; Pratt, 1992; Bhabha, 1994; Chambers, 1994; Clifford, 1997; Cronin, 2000; 2003; Polezzi, 2006; Appiah, 2006; Baker, 2006; 2007; 2014; 2016).

Aesthetics has become a field intimately connected with accounts of (and attempts to make sense of) experiences of migration and movement, because it is caught up in the various forms of representation and frameworks of discourse through which national and diasporic communities communicate what they are. Since the 1990s aesthetics has been included within intellectual circles focusing on migration, diaspora, and multiculturalism, although the prominence of scholarship on these issues has been framed by more socio-political concerns. The claim here is that aesthetics is investigated as a politically-oriented tool in its articulated representation of the movement and migration of peoples across nations and cultures in aesthetic terms and within aesthetic perspectives.

Dutch scholar Mieke Bal is pioneering in this field of research, where the arts may dialogue with migration and translation. Bal introduced the concept of “migratory aesthetics” in her essay “Lost in Space, Lost in the Library”, published in the collection *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practice between Migration and Art-Making* edited by Sam Durrant and Catherine M. Lord for the first time in 2007. She claims:

As the one who initially came up with the term “migratory aesthetics” I feel compelled to begin this reflection with a brief exploration of what it can possibly mean. A “travelling concept [...] if ever there was one, on the one hand it falls back on the notion of aesthetics, and on the other

it coins a modifier for that notion, truly modifying it. This modifier indicates that migratory aesthetic is an aesthetic, but takes the latter concept literally, as a *condition of sentient engagement*. Thus it is part and parcel of those concepts that attempt to establish an active interface between viewer and artwork. The modifier “migratory” does not refer to migrants or actual migration of people [...] but how it can help us understand possibilities for art to be politically effective. [...] “Migratory aesthetics”, then is a non-concept, a ground for experimentation that opens up possible relations with “the migratory”. (Bal, 2007: 23)

This reflection suggests that the concept “migratory” within the context of aesthetic discourse from a political perspective is a leading term according to which migrants and migration – where migrants are the subjects, and migration represents both the performing act and the state of being or living in conditions of transition – are inevitably a part of contemporary societies that significantly contributes to societal cultural transformations. Thus, to put it in Bal’s terms, if “aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory if it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary, that is, “globalized” world” (*ibid.*: 24).

In more recent studies, Bal argues as follows: “Migration is an issue that concerns us all. Therefore, I introduced the qualifier ‘migratory’ to signify not ‘what pertains to migrants’ but to culture, in the Western world as the case may be, we all share with migrants. Later, I will connect the qualifier to aesthetics” (Bal, 2015: 147). In the video installation *Nothing is Missing* 2016-11, she seeks to grasp the potential of a strategic use of universalism (“motherhood”), as well as of a foregrounding of differences (“migration”) (*ibidem*). The installation represents the first concrete example by means of which the tension between global and intimate is enacted, since such a domestic context is created within spaces that are public, such as museums, galleries, street markets, offices, and academic settings. The women’s enacting narratives in Bal’s video installation describe the diverse countries the women are from, and each narrative has in common the fact that they all emphasise the unchangeable condition of each woman who has seen her own son leaving for western Europe. Here Mona Baker’s theoretical framework on narrative accounts applied to translation and interpreting studies, where she discusses four types of narratives which we use to make sense of the world and our experience in and of it (Baker 2006; 2014), lends itself to map the narratives in these installations as ontological narratives (personal narratives about our place in the world and our own personal history (Baker 2006: 28), which are transformed into public narratives (shared, collective narratives which are elaborated and circulated by social institutional formations) (*ibid.*: 33). The aim of Bal’s installation and its hidden significance regards

aesthetic and political concepts through a triple “facing” (see explanation below), which is used in an attempt to reflect upon universalist definitions of humanity and a Bakhtinian sense of passivity and coerciveness. The installation is held as a form of intercultural aesthetic, based on “a performance of contact” (Bal 2015: 150), on the bond between speech and face, where speech is not simply speaking, but also listening and answering, whereas the face is any human “soul” turned into an “interface” (*ibidem*).

Bal’s sense of intercultural aesthetic, revealing aspects of action, performance and contact, assumes the features of an “action image”, which drives us back to Deleuze’s “perception image”, in which the act of facing implies “I face (you), hence, we are” to be understood as “I think, therefore I am”. Facing is Bal’s proposal for a “performance of contact across division, that avoids the two traps of universalist exclusion and relativist condescendence” (Bal, 2015: 150). Thus, moving from a focus on the individual to a focus on the interaction and connection between individuals, the use of “facing” as a theoretical instrument which points out unrevealed aspects of migratory narratives and experiences of migration in contrast to standardised and oversimplifying media strategies has become an illuminating technique deployed in other numerous forms of migrant representation and storytelling which have exploited faces and facing expedients to narrate and reveal stories, facts and events from a non-media outlook.

The visual and performing arts are today among the principal means used to communicate new truths concerning migration and people who experienced it by transforming aesthetic discourses and artistic spaces into sites where migrant struggles can inhabit a more human environment. Adapting artistic spaces into sites of resistance, subversion and protest as empowering *topoi*, migrants, artists and activists have been successful citizens who have given birth to the creation of counter-mapping, counter discourses and counter visuals as acts of aesthetic subversion metaphorically leading to “the breaching of all border and fences” (Mazzara, 2016: 141). This artistic practice in all its modes and genres offers a positive response to Gayatri Spivak’s famous dilemma “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, the arts demonstrating to readers and viewers a potent assertion of speech and self-representation. Indeed, in the domain of aesthetics, migrants have become “*political subjects*”, to use Rygiel’s expression (2011), by offering them the possibility to articulate new narratives that “may contribute to emancipating [them] from the burden of being the carriers of a fabricated crisis” (Mazzara, 2016: 140). Numerous and representative are the series of initiatives, film and documentary productions, museum exhibitions and installations, photography reportage and video art, theatrical performances and collectives that have been created in order to construct

new discourses around migration, what Federica Mazzara has referred to as the “aesthetics of migration” (2015)¹.

Since Bal’s coming of “migratory aesthetics” as a concept, research in the role of the arts and translation in the construction of migratory routes and stories has been carried out by moving first from ideological and political orientations to purely cultural and aesthetic objectives. As a case in point in terms of political commitment, T.J. Demos’s studies insist on a “series of key questions regarding the relationship between politics and aesthetics, mediums and mobility, socioeconomic disparity and emancipatory artists’ promise that shed further light on globalization’s crises” (2013: xiv). In a survey on the power of the visual arts with particular attention to moving installations, films and melancholic photographs, Demos’s purpose is to take into account works of art where actions and images of militarised borders and xenophobic and social relations are strengthened and visually reinforced. This is motivated by evaluating the inventiveness of inspiring aesthetic forms as promoting critical documentary strategies and new creative modes of mobile images and imaginative videos by means of which it is possible “to negotiate the increased movements of life across the globe” (*ibid.*: xiv). Among the key terms that have spread across genres and modalities of representation of migration, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “bare life” (2015) has become an influential metaphor for representing a global situation in which multitudes of human beings are reduced to a life “stripped of political identity and exposed to the state’s unmediated application of power” (*ibidem*).

In their volume, Stein Moslund, Anne Ring Petersen and Moritz Schramm demonstrate that the categories of migration and culture connected with politics, aesthetics and history to the point that they intersect with academic tropes such as “memory”, “place”, “displacement”, “translation”, “diversity”, “participation”, “representation”, “interculturalism”, “multiculturalism”. In contrast to Demos’s investigation on the role of the arts in the depiction of contexts of crisis, the Scandinavian scholars abandon the overtly politicised dimension of

¹ What follows is a list of the most recent and significant cases of crowdsourcing aesthetic activities, events, collectives, visual and performing arts – including films, installations, theatrical performances, exhibitions and photography collection – with which we had come across: *Odiseo Arriving Alone* (exhibition & performance 2016); *Porto M* (Museum, Collective Askavusa, Lampedusa 2014); *Project#RefugeeCameras* (photo installation, McElvaney 2015); *Calais Children: A Case to Answer* (documentary, Sue Clayton 2016); *Queens of Syria* (documentary, Yasmin Fedda 2014; theatrical performance, Zoe Lafferty 2016); *On the Bride Side* (documentary, Antonio Angliaro, Gabriele del Grande, Khaled Soliman Al Nassiry 2014); *Soltanto il mare* (documentary Dagmawi Yimer, Giulio Cederna, Fabrizio Barraco 2011); *Miraculi* (LampedusaInFestival 2014); *WESTERN UNION: Small Boats* (film installation, Isac Julien 2007); *Countless* (Maya Ramsay 2017); London Refugee Week (2017); see also (Rizzo 2017; 2018). For an accurate and complete study of the production and diffusion of documentaries, installations and exhibitions on the topic of migration and globalization, see Demos (2013); Moslund, Ring Petersen, Schramm (eds) (2015); Bond, Bonsaver and Faloppa (eds) (2015).

migration and move away from portraying difficulties and struggles in individual migrant experiences. In so doing, they take inspiration from the power of art by looking into it as the space where identities and meanings can be understood across differences. By gathering new perspectives on the subject of the arts in relation to migration, Moslund, Ring Petersen and Schramm's research moves into territories where cross-cultural disciplinary fields blend together, as it also occurs in studies conducted by Nikos Papastergiadis, Roger Bromely, Edward Casey, and Mieke Bal (2007; 2015). These studies have opened up dialogues between culture, migration and aesthetics. In other words, the artistic and cultural circuits within which migration is constructed are revealing "aspects of migration that are invisible to governmental and public discourses", since "[a]esthetic representations are better positioned" (Mazzara, 2016: 130) to allow the protagonists of the crossings "to acquire a visibility commonly denied in mainstream narratives" (*ibidem*).

Against a backdrop where aesthetic discourse is recognised to have the ability "to reorganise the realm of the visible, diverting the position and the roles of observer and observed, in order to gain different perspectives (Mazzara, 2015: 460), we use the concept of "translating the margin" as an umbrella phrase that involves linguistic, aesthetic and cultural practices which aim at disrupting mainstream systems of migrant representation (e.g. TV, newspapers, advertising, films, videos). Research in the role of the arts in the construction of migrant narratives in opposition to media mainstream news stories and visuals has indeed had a significant impact on reversing migrant images from "mere bodies without words and yet threatening in their presence as a mass, a multitude, an haemorrhagic stream of anonymous and unfamiliar others" (Mazzara, 2015: 460) to human beings who are able to produce counter discourses and counter narratives as active forms of resistance and subversion. This has grown in opposition to humanitarian and sentimentalist perspectives, on the one hand, and political and securitarian attitudes on migration, on the other, which have both spread an idea of migrants as illegalised travellers, criminals or victims.

Today migrants are still marginalised and occupy peripheral spaces but, at the same time, their visibility has grown within cultural and artistic creative productions due to the intervention of artists, activists and scholars. The arts, storytelling and writing have revealed the other side of what mainstream media have disseminated about and around the so called 'migration crisis' so far. The merit of the arts within the context of the migration crisis, based on the presence of peoples who have experienced migration and who have been labelled as economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees escaping their countries for war conflicts, famine and poverty –, thus consists in the transformation of migrants from "wasted lives", to

use Bauman's expression (2004), or "imperceptible bodies" (Mazzara, 2016: 135) into "subjects of power, the power of subverting the narrative around their journey, their past and their desires for the future" (*ibidem*).

New subverted narratives and visuals have re-given migrant human beings their lost dignity in a hostile Europe; new concepts, ideas and challenges originating from academic fields, politically oriented associations and social groups have increased the opportunity for migrants living in liminal spaces to become the main actors and tellers of their own stories. In doing so, the mere process of media "spectacularization" (*ibidem*) has been deconstructed in favour of a mechanism of "subjectification" (*ibidem*) of migrant experiences, while subverting stereotypes imposed by Western medias' gaze.

3. Socio-cultural translation turn

Increasingly interdisciplinary, cross-cultural and intercultural critical approaches to the concept of marginality, have put emphasis on the connections between migration, translation and the arts. The dialogue between migration and translation is not new and is rooted in Loredana Polezzi's and Michael Cronin's thinking on travel, translation and migration. Interest in the role of translation in relation to marginality and the dynamics of migration has increased in the 21st-century, when mobility and globalisation have made cultural institutions, public spaces and digital contexts crucial spaces for the negotiation of lingua-cultural transactions in a variety of media, genres and discourses. Within a scenario of multilingual and multicultural exposure and of increased cultural and linguistic diversity, translation has reinforced its role as a bridge and a form of communication across cultures and languages that occupy marginal or peripheral spaces (House, 2014; Rizzo, 2008; Federici, 2006; Katan, 1999; Hatim & Mason, 1997).

In 2006, Polezzi dedicated a special issue of *The Translator* to the topic of "Translation, Travel, Migration" and investigated the modalities by means of which travel, translation and migration can act as both practices and products, while gaining increased attention within academic contexts. The three concepts, "translation", "travel" and "migration" were relevant to the understanding of the different modes of mobility encompassing "both spatial dimensions (mostly associated with travel, its means, its routes and its narration) and socio-economic ones (usually connected to migratory movements)" (Polezzi, 2006: 170).

The approach to mobility and translation phenomena as it has been scrutinised over the past few decades is thus embedded, among others, in Polezzi's views of translation and

mobility as complex social and representational procedures “linked to both spatial and linguistic mobility (which encompass, on the one hand, economic migration, exile and self-exile, diasporas and other forms of displacement, and, on the other, interlingual translation and interpretation, self-translation, and instances of multilingual production)” (*ibid.*: 179). Polezzi stresses “the impact of complex instances of mobility on the contemporary world also invites us to rethink binary models of identity and of translation, positing multiple translated (and translating) subjects as the protagonists of today’s global communication processes” (*ibidem*).

The contemporary socio-political translation turn, thus, draws on studies on travel, translation and migration, on the one hand, and on recent theories on the numerous roles of translation as solidarity, collaboration, intervention, (re)narration, translating dissent and the selves (Baker, 2014, 2016; Nicholau, *et al.*, 2008; Munday, 2008) on the other hand. These studies in translation see it as an active practice which challenges media discourses and attempts to reverse the construction of marginal voices, among which is the voice of the migrant. The socio-political role of translation, which provides a pro-active and constructive response to the persecution of the migrants crossing the globe, is also rooted in the “aesthetics of migration”, where ‘acts of translation’ are used to demonstrate how translation in its broad sense can be adopted to counteract mainstream forms of representation through the creation of visual and textual narratives that take shape across diverse genres and modalities, while constructing and conceptualising dislocation as a form of life experience. Mona Baker, Susan Bassnett (2005; 2014), Moira Inghilleri (2017), Luis Pérez-González (2014a; 2014b), among others, have been inspiring resources to critically develop an approach to the construction of migration within aesthetic discourse through translation procedures.

Translation as collaboration and solidarity is developed in Mona Baker’s outlook on the concept of translating dissent, where the significance of solidarity indicates a process that can “raise awareness among the wider public, challenge and expose the arbitrariness and lack of imagination of those in power, and provide a further platform for connecting individual activists and groups and hence expanding the network of protest” (Baker, 2016: 5). Baker also refers to the importance of “translation, interpreting, subtitling and other forms of mediation” as fundamental linguacultural mechanisms that need to “be brought to the centre of the political arena” (*ibid.*: 2). In defining two diverse senses of translation within contexts of conflict and protest, Baker points out that the narrow sense of translation “involves rendering fully articulated stretches of textual material from one language into another, and encompasses various modalities such as written translation, subtitling and oral interpreting [...] from the written translation of statements and campaigns by groups [...] to the subtitling of videos by

collectives” (*ibid.*: 6). In contrast, the broad sense of translation “involves the mediation of diffuse symbols, experiences, narratives and linguistic signs of varying lengths across modalities (words into image, lived experience into words), levels and varieties of language (Standard Written Arabic and spoken Egyptian, for example), and cultural spaces” (*ibid.*: 7). This kind of translation includes the use of European languages (in the cases examined here, the European language is English) in literary and visual texts exploring the topic of migration, and “in addressing regional audiences, as well as the journey of visual and musical artefacts across social and national boundaries” (*ibidem*).

Both senses of translation permeate the personal experience of artists – writers, filmmakers, painters, street arts, web producers - and citizens, including migrant people, who are turned into individual/collective activists promoting political change through the arts. As stated elsewhere (Rizzo 2017), recent works such as Richard Flanagan’s *Notes on the Exodus*, with illustrations by Ben Quilty, 2016 or the artistic works exhibited on the occasion of the *London Refugee Week*, June 2017 (Rizzo 2017: 58) demonstrate how Baker’s broad sense of translation is enacted in artistic practice.

The complexities of translating lived experiences into words also reveal the narrow sense of translation, which is given by the participation of migrant people in eyewitness oral accounts of the conflicts, where these accounts are transcribed from oral native languages into written English. Both senses serve numerous functions for the protection of a variety of rights of individuals and minor communities, and charges translation with communicative duties that involve a sense of responsibility and intercultural awareness for listening to and interpreting others’ stories of political enactment (Inghilleri 2017).

Translation as political enactment is a concept fully developed by Luis Pérez-González’s idea of translation as a reterritorializing force, which originates from the “growing mobility of individuals, either motivated by forced dispersal or voluntary displacement, immigrant and diasporic communities” (Pérez-González, 2014, p. 61), and which contributes to the creation of “collaborative technologies”, “spaces of participation and collaboration”, and to the re-definition of the “traditional boundaries of nation-based cultural and linguistic constituencies” (*ibid.*)².

4. This special issue

² The third section on the translation turn (with the exception of the state of the art of travel, translation and migration) and its developments within aesthetic discourse is part of a research published in *Ars Aeterna* (Rizzo 2017).

The creative and critical process of posing questions about and exploring new perspectives on migration is the common thread that runs through all contributions in this volume, whose aim is to present immigrant experiences through the lens of the arts to reveal how migrant marginalities are fabricated in the popular imagination by the practices and policies of powerful institutions, from political to social to the media. The contributions do not intend to provide solutions to the question of the ‘migration crisis’, instead, their purpose is to formulate, articulate and describe issues concerning the core topic of the volume by providing the readers with an alternative interdisciplinary glance that can contribute to a richer understanding of the challenge facing migrant populations, as well as the opportunity that migration poses for both native and host cultures.

The aim of this special issue is thus to investigate the characteristics of English (where it is used) in popular genres and art forms and across various lingua-cultural contexts in order to shed light on the various strategic requirements shaping the translation of contemporary cultural products across a wide range of artistic and creative forms, and to scrutinise to what extent the different platforms of dissemination impact on language variety. In this respect, the language of diversity which emerges in the very act of translating what is publicly supposed to be marginal is scrutinised, on the one hand, in terms of the relationship between displayed bilingual texts and verbal and visual ‘labelled’ constructions and, on the other hand, by considering the language of diversity as travelling across linguistic, cultural and social boundaries. The common topic in this issue is the focus on the role of translation, in its broad and narrow sense, of racial, ethnic and sexual difference in a wide range of western visual and verbal textual forms, where the conceptualisation of minorities (e.g. otherness, blackness, Islamism, migration) occurs as a crucial element in the visual and performing arts.

The papers selected for this special issue put emphasis on the central role of translation in all its forms and ways of life within the arts, whose objective is to take a closer look at migration and marginality and their multiple intersections. Each contribution is set in a specific cultural and geographical context, and their flexibility in the adoption of theoretical models and methodological approaches challenges and facilitates the understanding of cross-cultural phenomena within the realm of aesthetic discourse and its construction of migration.

The volume is divided into four sections: “Voices of filmmakers and writers”, “Narratives and documentaries”, “The Media” and “The Arts”.

The first section (which is a kind concession from the artists) explores translation and migration within artistic itineraries created by professionals in the field of documentary films (Clayton), literature (Abolueta), non-fiction and journalism (Camarrone). The section opens

with *On the ethics of inclusion and the politics of cultural mediation* - a conversation between British filmmaker **Sue Clayton**, professor of film and television studies at Goldsmith College, London, and **Roberta Lentini**, a postgraduate student in Modern Languages and Translation for International Relations at the University of Palermo. The interview charts the long-term research by Sue Clayton into the conditions and experiences of migrant people in the UK and outside the country with a particular focus on the fate of the 1900 unaccompanied minors resident in the Calais Jungle as it was due to be destroyed by the French government in October 2016. In her film *CALAIS CHILDREN: A CASE TO ANSWER* (subtitled in Italian by Roberta Lentini as *I bambini di Calais: un caso da risolvere*), she documents their struggle to be accepted by the UK, their dispersal to centres all over France pending legal action, and their eventual return to Calais.

Clayton has committed herself to investigating the cases of these children, together with a staff of voluntary lawyers, and her documentary film can be taken as an excellent example of how the arts – the visual arts and aesthetic discourse in general – can contribute to the dissemination of information and knowledge about migrants through modalities, genres and content structures that differ from the ones exploited by the media. Explicit in Clayton’s artistic contribution is the diffusion of new perspectives on migration – including the aim to create a film that can counteract perceptions of refugees as “either threatening hordes trying to invade the UK, or sad victims with no agency” (Clayton, online, 2017). In the conversation with Roberta Lentini, she stresses how crucial it is to recognise the migrants’ resilience and anger and how to express these qualities. Translation and collaboration emerge as necessary elements in the process of communication involving different participants: the migrant adults and unaccompanied minors, both the filmmaker and lawyers working with her, the British institutions as the main political framework in the film, and both the French and British police officers as actively present in the scenes in terms of resistance and refusal.

Resistance, from the perspective of a Sudanese migrant woman in the Scottish city of Aberdeen, is also the central topic in the novel *The Translator* (1999). The essay *On Writing The Translator* by Sudanese writer **Leila Aboulela**, where the author declares the influence that *Jane Eyre* had in the production of her novel, testifies to the sense of frustration and alienation perceived by migrant and Muslim Sammar, the Sudanese protagonist of the novel, also, who works as a mother tongue translator from Arabic in a Department of Islamic Studies. Against a backdrop where intercultural and crosscultural connections define the fictional and autobiographical context that Aboulela uses as a frame for her novel, the writer articulates the

relationship between translation and migration in terms of resistance, on the one hand, and compromise, on the other. She affirms that

The Translator is set in a pre- 9/11 Britain, in the years following the First Gulf War of 1991. This was the start of a raised consciousness among Muslim immigrants and a need to define themselves in terms of their religious identity. It was also the decade in which concerns over radical Islam and terrorism were growing, although at that point in time the threat was confined to Western targets in Muslim countries. (Aboulela, in this volume, p.)

Resistance, which is often a form of protection exploited by migrant identities who occupy liminal spaces in host countries, is moderated at the end of the essay when Aboulela assumes that migrants – no matter if they are Muslim, old or young – must be part of the host country. Reaching beyond resistance, Aboulela thus seems to offer a compromise but at the same time asserts the need for visibility of the other – the presence of the other in literature – showing how ‘compromise’ needs commitment from both host and migrant: “The men who crowd the mosques, the women who go on Haj, the teenage girls who wear hijab must not be excluded from English literature. Especially if these mosques and these women are now an integral part of Europe” (*ibid.*:).

Migration from an international literary angle is surveyed in **Davide Camarrone’s** paper *Le letterature migrano, la migrazione nelle letterature* (“Literatures migrate, migration in literatures”), where the Italian writer and journalist questions the dynamics and mechanisms that can be found in the movement of literatures, and in the construction of migration within literary paths. Camarrone scrutinises the phenomenon which lies behind the transition of cultures and peoples by mentioning authors and filmmakers belonging to diverse cultures – from Mariane Satrapj, Emmanuele Carrère, Sue Clayton and Hisham Matar to Primo Levi, Yasmina Khadra, Atiq Rahimi and Aikan Gunday – and by putting emphasis on how such migrations have stimulated the growth of new cultures, different peoples and other places to live in. Movements of people, languages, cultures and goods are unstoppable, and marginal spaces continue to exist and expand, whereas translation never ceases to play the role as a connecting point between distant cultures and languages both for geographical and ideological reasons.

The “Documentaries and narratives” section, which is the second one in the special issues, welcomes five contributions from authors who share common theoretical approaches, modalities and modes of analysis in selected genres. Multimodal analysis, audiovisual translation, narrative theory and translation as (re)narration are here employed in order to investigate migration and marginality within narratives and documentaries which are

disseminated across digital platforms and public spaces (Iaia and Errico, Carbonara, Raffi, Buonanno and Hulme).

In their exploration of the multimodal composition of audiovisual messages aimed at the promotion of a different and uncommon perception of holiday places in Southern Italy affected by mass migrations, **Pietro Luigi Iaia** and **Lucia Errico** in their paper *A multimodal approach to the experiential reformulations of ancient epic narratives for the emotional promotion of Salento as Wonderland in Responsible Tourism* take into account the diffusion of videos, where migratory movements towards “Utopian places” (representing contemporary migrants’ journeys) intend to stimulate the audience’s cultural awareness of migration issues, while sensitizing the public to develop views in contrast to mainstream discourse on what the authors of this article refer to as “migrants’ odysseys”. While accounting for an ethnopoetic translation of selected verses taken from ancient Greek myth into modern variations of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), the audiovisual advertisement of Salento as a case in point of a non-standard form of advertising tourist destinations is made accessible to tourists and migrants through alternative forms of communication rooted in the arts. Aesthetic discourse intervenes in the interaction of words, depictions of sea crossings and sound production in opposition to the dominant ideologies that are spread in spectacularised mass-media representations: the “multimodal re-narration of migration events” strengthens “the schematic representation of seafarers as ‘voyagers’ who start epic journeys in search of a utopian Wonderland of peace, natural beauty, cultural tolerance and better life conditions” (Iaia, Errico, in this volume, p.).

Multimodality and (re)narration are also the instruments of analysis employed by **Lorena Carbonara** in her paper *Translating marginality into Art: A multimodal approach* in order to shed light on the contemporary scenario of mass migration across the Mediterranean Sea. By exploring the visual arts as counter narratives that translate the margin, on the one hand, and give voice to unheard migrant identities, on the other, Carbonara examines the multimodal narratives provided by the artistic work of German photographer Kevin McElvaney who, in 2015, conceived his *Project#RefugeesCameras*, and Ethiopian director Dagmawi Yimer’s 2014 video-art *Asmat/Names*. These ontological narratives given voice within aesthetic discourse testify to the growing phenomenon of the dissemination of stories and facts from more human, individual and personal, perspectives that attempt to stimulate the reader or viewer’s attention towards mechanisms of openness to and respect of the condition of being a migrant.

The condition of being a migrant in a host country, such as in Thatcher’s London, is scrutinised by **Giovanna Buonanno** in her paper *Camilla Gibb’s Sweetness in the Belly as a novel of*

translation within the literary circuit of a particular genre which chronicles the experiences of Lilly Abdal, a white Muslim woman of African roots (which parallel Aboulela's and Sammar's roots and religious beliefs), striving for a dignified existence in multicultural London. Moving from a theoretical perspective within forms of "translational writing" and "narratives of translation" in English literature, Buonanno sheds light on the complexity of Lilly's plural self, her multiple displacements across Africa and a marginal area of London, where she works as nurse. Hybridity as a marking sign of her complex personality is what characterises the protagonist in her constant act of fighting in order to find a place where she can settle down. Her migrant and religious origins, which she reveals in a first-person narrative voice, mark her migrant life since she was born:

I was born in Yugoslavia, breast-fed in the Ukraine, weaned in Corsica, freed from nappies in Sicily and walking by the time we got to the Algarve. Just when I was comfortable speaking French, we'd be off to Spain. Just when I had a new best friend, the world was full of strangers again. Until Africa, life was a series of aborted conversations" (Buonanno, in the volume, p.).

As a type of transnational migrant writing in English embedded in transcultural itineraries, Camilla Gibb's *Sweetness in the Belly* can be perceived as a form of "narrative in translation" which questions cultural identities, where plural subjectivities who occupy marginal spaces are rendered in the "linguistic fabric" of the English language which echoes different idioms stemming from Arabic and Harari to Afro-Asiatic and Semitic languages. The characters that are assimilated to the linguistic and cultural texture of the novel provide a clear framework of an "aesthetic of marginality", where refugee and migrant discourse is challenged and reconceptualised within artistic settings.

The aesthetics of migration is also a central element in **Francesca Raffi's** *Translating migrants: Lost voices in the Italian documentary film Come il Peso dell'Acqua and its English subtitles* in which the author scrutinises Italian filmmaker Andrea Segre's documentary on migration *Come il Peso dell'Acqua*, where acts of crossing from three different African countries to Italian shores are narrated from the perspectives of three migrant women and mothers: Gladys Yeboah Adomako from Ghana, Nasreen Tah from Syria, and Semhar Hagos from Eritrea. The linguistic and cultural framework of the three protagonists is varied and articulated through the use of language within the documentary itself. Three language variables intermingle in the linguistic context of the narration, where the African stories are set: non-standard varieties of English or English as a Lingua Franca, Arabic and Tigrinya. Against a backdrop of language variation and variables in language, which make Segre's documentary a multilingual film, where language diversity and multilingualism occupy an essential role,

translating choices within the setting of audiovisual translation techniques contribute to the understanding of the film itself as embedded in a context of difference and linguistic diversity, which challenges both the audience, while increasing his sense of engagement for the migrant stories, and the film industry with its standard norms in subtitling. Multilingualism in cinema thus emerges as an aspect that more than others highlights the inner features of the migration process and the linguistic and cultural specificities which characterise the narrated stories, while reinforcing the concept of difference and diversity by “making the audience experience the film as a template of life as it is lived” (Raffi, in the volume, p.).

The last contribution of this section can be located in between the space of storytelling and translation as both means of self-expression and ethnic identification. **Harriet Hulme** in her paper “For to seken straunge strondes”: *Translating Chaucer hospitably in Refugee Tales* investigates the narrative accounts that are told in *Refugee Tales* edited by Herd and Anna Pincus, by shedding light on a series of anonymous stories which “both explore the inhumanity of the asylum process and articulate the need to translate this hostility into a hospitable response to those seeking asylum in the UK” (Hulme, in this volume, p.). If, on the one hand, the refugee tales analysed by Hulme put emphasis on practices of persecution and atrocity addressed to migrant people and refugees, on the other hand, the objective of these narratives is to give voice to refugees and migrant people through the narration of that self that is not considered in mainstream media forms: the telling of human stories through oral private and public discourse. Furthermore, in Hulme’s study, translation appears to be an instrument useful not only for knowledge dissemination, but also as a tool for shaping hospitality. Translation becomes an indispensable device for the narration of the stories and is understood in Hulme’s terms both as a “geographic and cultural transposition” and “a linguistic and aesthetic one”. All the tales are framed within dynamics concerning intralingual and interlingual translation, but also relating to processes of community interpreting, where a translator – “an interpreter, a lawyer, a civil servant” speaks on behalf of the asylum seeker (*ibid.*).

In “The Media” section, the third one in this issue, Filmer and Magazzù exploit a variety of theoretical and critical approaches, including multimodality, discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis, in order to deconstruct modalities and modes of knowledge dissemination about the migration crisis and migrant people. **Denise Filmer** in her paper *War of the words: A comparative sample study of news discourse on the “migrant crisis” and “Islamic terrorists” across Italian/English lingua-cultures* investigates the linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical choices that have been used in the “language of conflict” both in “Italian and Anglophone newspaper discourse” (Filmer, in this volume, p.). By adopting “a comparative lens across

lingua-cultural boundaries”, Filmer’s scrutiny concentrates not on the survey of counter narratives – a common aspect in many of the contributions in this volume and in research on the aesthetics of migration in general – but on questions of power, representation and ideology – which are revealed through the strategies and methods of critical discourse analysis. The investigation is conducted across different types of Italian and Anglo-American newspapers – ranging from *The Washington Post*, *The Sun* and the *BBC* to *Liberio* and *Il Tempo* – shows how news stories are narrative forms and communicative events, where information on refugees and their circumstances is relayed according to linguistic and rhetorical choices that impose reflections “on the status quo of racism in the news” (*ibid.*).

The language of conflict in newspapers is also the object of **Giulia Magazzù**’s comparative analysis that involves a survey that looks at how representations in the media disseminate forms of ‘knowledge’ about migrants and migration in Italian newspapers. In her paper, *Visual choices in the representation of immigrants in the Italian press. Exploring visual dysphemisms*, whose study shares common traits with Filmer’s analysis in the same section, Magazzù scrutinises the role of power and ideology as sources of racism and discrimination emerging in newspaper discourse on both the textual and the visual level. By applying perspectives and methods of research rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis and the paradigms of Visual Grammar to *Il Giornale e Il Giornale di Sicilia*, Magazzù identifies mechanisms which disseminate racial attitudes towards migrants and refugees in news stories on the migration crisis. In particular, cases of ‘visual racism’ (Magazzù, in the volume, p.), rooted in a considerable number of visual elements in the selected Italian newspapers, contribute to developing a negative “representation of immigrants and tend to provoke, whether consciously or not, discrimination against [them]” (*ibid.*).

Magazzù demonstrates how “dysphemisms”, which depict a particular reality or group of people in a manner that reinforces values and social codes, while encouraging stereotypes and prejudices, are used as “a resource for textual manipulation”, in the cases explored in the Italian press. The final section of this issue on “The Arts” moves away from media mainstream perspectives and aims to reinforce the core element of this volume, which stresses the role of translating the margin from the perspective of aesthetic discourse. Translating the margin is an act that deploys new voices, new faces, and new discourses to speak about the protagonists of the migration crisis, not as victims or dangerous people (as demonstrated in Magazzù’s, Filmer’s and Clayton’s investigations on media mainstream), but as participants who have stories to be heard across diverse channels, genres and modalities, and ‘lives’ to begin ‘to live’

in the marginal spaces they have been forced to occupy (as shown in the contributions by Buonanno, Hulme, Carbonara, Raffi, Iaia and Errico, Aboulela and Camarrone).

Within the framework of Agamben's Homo "sacer", which contemplates how migrants and refugees have been left in conditions of bare lives as a consequence of sins they have never committed, where they are "[e]xcluded from legal rights and without legal status" (Folnović Jaitner, in this volume, p.), **Sabina Folnović Jaitner** in her paper "When will we be somebody again?". *The refugee movement and artistic projects in Austria* encourages reflections upon the power of the arts and the aesthetics of migration, referring to artistic intervention as a form of translation. Aesthetic discourse is identified as an empowering force in the "refugee's struggle for legal status" (*ibidem*). Artistic interventions are thus posed, on the one hand, as powerful forms of interference with "ready-made narratives" distorted by socio-political contexts and, on the other hand, as artistic elements that are able "to tell the stories of the "Other" (*ibidem*). In other words, Folnović Jaitner's study demonstrates that a selection of counter narratives occurring in artistic interventions in contemporary Austria have acted as forms of translation, empowering "refugees to regain their political life" (*ibidem*) and stimulating attitudes of collaboration between "refugees and local people work[ing] together [...], creating a safe space where every person has a voice and is valued as a human being" (*ibidem*). While recreating spaces for the understanding of human rights, the arts can offer an invaluable contribution to the re-articulation of meanings of "solidarity within Europe" (*ibidem*).

Solidarity and collaboration through the intervention of the arts and aesthetic discourse is also central to **Varga Tunde**'s investigation of how migration can be approached in art exhibitions and to what extent these forms of artistic intervention can contribute to dismantling prefabricated constructions of identities according to social and political stances governing a specific system. In her paper *Lost Voices Reframed: Migration and the Refugee Crisis in the Context of Exhibitions*, Tunde scrutinises two exhibitions that took place in Hungary in 2015, *Horizontal Standing* and *Unintended Consequences*, by defining them as spaces of memory and history, as a "possible way for self-construction through a non-linear, non-teleological narrative", in which migrants' identities can be "imagined", "*imaged*" (Tunde, in this volume, p.) and revealed in public spaces and platforms. By consolidating the main issue of this issue, art installations, exhibitions and museum activities can generate action and intervention and provide stimuli for those people left in the margins, who have become the participants/protagonists of new cultural and political itineraries that aim to defend and protect diversity.

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