

**Lenia Marquez, Maria Sophia Pimentel Biscaia and Gloria Bastos
(eds.), *Intercultural Crossings. Conflict, Memory, Identity*, Bruxelles:
Peter Lang, 2012, 208 pp., ISBN 978-90-5201-816-4 pb¹**

Review by Lia POP

The book is printed by PIE Peter Lang , Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt am Mein, New York, Oxford, Wien, in the Series "Europe of Cultures" no. 4, as a Europe of Culture Forum. It is a collective volume, which is trying to cover the issues specific to contemporary process of global mobility and of its effects: the encounters of the foreigners. The authors "come" in a forum and try to see how the encounters could not become conflicts. They plead for the concept of crossing, passage(s) from one culture to another. They develop the benefits of the crossing process, explore its roots – colonial experience – and figure its future.

The perspective of the studies is the inter-culturalism, taken as an epistemology not specifically questioned. (There is not an individual part devoted to analyze what the intercultural approach supposes to be done in terms of philosophy of society, in terms of guiding literature, and in terms of leading values.) That is why the literature quoted in the book is completely separate with each study. There are not crossed, but fully independent references there. The intercultural view is simply taken as a framework where a society with the mutual understanding of the inhabitants (irrespective of their roots, and memory) and their creative collective work is designed to develop, but the conflicts, the ghost of the past, and the unfair fight for a respectful group identities still act and still pervert the dream of a good place for all, even for immigrants. What is here disappointing on the Content is that the recent new social trends when the multiculturalism as a large and generous social contract is

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theoretically questioned and practically broken, is out of interest. The Content would be much more provocative if some studies would attack the new trends of politics in Europe. The discourse and the practice in the radical extreme Rightist political movements, as the Magyar Garda, or others like this in Italy; the substantial and systematic attacks against the Roma people in the tabloids – from London and Paris, to Switzerland; the anti-immigrants declarations in elections campaign of the leaders from the moderate political parties, the anti-immigrants declarations at the state level – in Germany, in Netherlands, in France, in Italy; the domestic policies in EU countries abusing the Roma people, EU citizens, are expelled as illegal immigrants - would be an issue of very contemporary life.

It would be also a signal for the foreigners on what could happen (In the earth quake of May, 2012, the Romanians inhabitants from Ferrara were not received in the municipality tents, because there were not enough places for Italians.)

The Content proposed by the editors is made by 13 different studies with an Introduction signed by Lenia Marquez, Maria Sophia Pimentel Biscaia and Gloria Bastos.

The Introduction is revealing the organizational framework, the main issues opened in the book, the context and some preliminary concepts. The perspective is the UNESCO one, which aims to promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, to support the development of intercultural competences and to develop into the most desirable way of life of our time: THE CROSSING. The challenging points are: the cultural encounters and the fears associated to them; the Otherness in the binary logic Western Self; the history of West Europe colonialism – portrayed as the geographic discoveries. The authors reveal that the multiculturalism was an optimistic attempt of an optimistic world, but the serene world of pre- 9/11, is changed in an "age of terror". What they did not emphasize enough is that the age is also multi-folded. It is an age of encountering and of networking combined with an age of terror; an age of openness – with the opportunities, resources, and ideologies of openness – hunted by the memories of the citadel life (with barbarous invaders jeopardizing and ruining anything).

The many-folded multiculturalism (rhetorically used, contributed to control societies and minority group accession to resources), the cultural diversity (which is not everywhere multicultural); the fears at the encounter with the other, as the main concept proposed by the authors bases the studies.

The chapters of the book are prefaced by a philosophical analysis, *Dynamics of Cultural Landscapes. Identities and Diffusion Process*, signed by the professor Joao Jesus Fernandez (a geographer). It is the single non-descriptive, but prospective text. It forged the concept of a Cultural Landscape as a concept for mobile context for individual identity. The *Dynamic of Cultural Landscape* asserts that the new comers model the old territories of an old civilization with their specific markers. As results there appears a new geography of cultures, populations, territories What would be especially provocative in the analysis is concerning the evaluation. How the new geography is assessed by the old and new inhabitants? The text is really important, because it is defining the cultural landscape as multi-dimensions framework of human being life: as a landscape coined by the sounds, the smells ... With it, the researchers are invited to explore the real sites and to confirm/infirm the assertion.

The Coimbra professor attached the role of the major dynamic factor in changing culture and to establish the passing possibility to diasporas. The diasporas it is a term taken by professor Fernandez with the meaning of a large and active economically, socially and culturally group with foreign roots. (We do not embrace totally the concept as he coined it. We prefer – having in mind the Romanian history of mobility - to see a vertical dimension in the moving people process. The elites constitute diasporas, easy to relate to other elites in diasporas. They do not have their specific sites to live in, differently by the poor migrants, the unskilled as the literature identified them. The elites define their specific needs, clubs to networking and integration agenda. They are distant by burdening the poor coming from the same country. The poor constitute migrants groups, located differently and living differently.) He is considering a center enactment – in the Diaspora world – and peripheries where the center expands. The propagation of the center is a physical and a symbolical process, too. It is also an endless process.

The text proposed by professor Fernandez deserves a multi-level academic lecture and as it deserves a specific analyze. It is also an invitation to a scientific dialogue, to a forum with a specific purpose to a particular approach on how the contemporary networking and mobility affect our landscape is done by the study of Christian Hummelsund Voie: *Permeable Borders Lines*, which explore the architectural styles expanding.

The other texts are the descriptive materials on global migration process and the stories generated by the status of otherness. Any of the study is instructive



and is fully recommended to be read and used in the scientific work. We would like to specifically emphasize the study on Womens' Journey to Portugal, (Joana Miranda); "The Haviness of a History that Couldn't Leave": Diasporic Trauma in Multicultural Canada, (Belen Martin Lucas); Stories on Lebanese Migrations in the Brazilian Literature (Rosa Maria Sequiera)... There are also several studies dedicated to violence and conflicts. The Colonial Journey: Confrontation between Europe and Africa (Maria Isabel Joao), Colluding Strokes: Imperialistic Brutality and affection in Andre Brinks The Other Side of Silence. (MariaSofia Piementel Biscaia) One is dedicated on the perpetuation of violence and women un-consideration. It is pointed out how the manuals send by home, to educate children in the spirit of home culture is a source of values in conflict with the society where they have to integrate. The study signed by Lenia Marquez, on Nicolas Bouvier, Creating Stories, Mapping Memories: Nicolas Bouvier at Intercultural Crossing, is analyzing how he was learning the far East culture of being respectful to the Otherness and of self developing modesty as a large cultural experience result. Trying to classify scientifically, the texts of the volume proposed are: reflexive and explorative; descriptive. A step before being inquisitive or provocative, (specifically designed to provoke controversies would add interest in the lecture.

The cover of Peter Lang, Printed House Collection is designed to become a brand. It is inviting the readers in a world of creation and innovation. The work of Massimiliano Fuksas, MyZeil is the symbol of the collection. The contrast of the colors is also a factor to give identity to it.

Concluding it is to recommend the book to the specialists, to the students and last but not least, to the politicians and politician advisers. It could suggest ways of living together in a world of the encountering: the crossing.