

MIGRATION, HISTORY AND EXISTENCE

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Le migrant, loin d'être l'image archaïque d'une phase révolue d'accumulation capitaliste, loin d'être cette entrave à la souveraineté des États-nations, est l'avenir du monde.¹

Bertrand Badie

The Field

This intervention focuses on the nature, history and politics of migration. I will of necessity move from the broadest philosophical and historical perspective, to concrete and particular examples drawn from our present situation at the beginning of the XXI century, and only parenthetically refer to more detailed studies from the history of European and American migration². Schematically, and introducing

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¹ *Les Migrants, Citoyens du Monde ou Meteques Planetaires?*, No. 1206 - Mars-Avril, 1997. This issue deals with the thorny issue of citizenship in Europe, which cannot be solely tied to nationhood or to social-juridical practices of legitimation. Author notes how the fear of dissolution risks changing all immigrants into "second degree citizens."

² Ideally, this paper should be followed by a set of 40 world historical maps showing a great variety of migrations from the iron-age through today,

my keywords, I intend to address the meaning of the word/concept migration, from the Latin *migrare*, literally “to move (on),”³ which concerns the relocation of people at some time or other from one specific place on the globe to another, and typically not under the most propitious conditions. This requires that I pay attention to at least three things:

First, the drama of leaving or *departing*, which compels reflection on the connected issue of uprooting, or the meaning of roots. In short, we must address the sense of provenance, and in the background the philosophy of *origins*.

Secondly, the complex reality of existence and survival “along the way,” that is, we have to thematize the *passage* or *travel* itself, asking what happens, and what does it mean to someone, often to a family, a group or an entire people, to change geophysical dwelling and the sociohistorical world they know. I will attempt a typology of travelers in order to bring out how complex the issue can get, entreating policy-makers not to generalize extensively.

From that, critical thought shifts to the other end of the spectrum, that is, where the relocating, the *migrare* ends up: we have to account for the incertitude and anxiety of *arrival*, or destination, the existential and political realities that confront the traveler, the migrant, entering a different world. Among the themes that will surface, we need to consider the layered complexities of *culture shock*.

Taking a step back, momentarily, studying and thinking about migration requires that we consider issues relating to *identity*, to the sense of *belonging*, and therefore connect between geography and history or, better said, *historical memory*, which is *always localized and culturally marked*. My working hermeneutic premise is that I feel that all absolutes are *historically contingent*. Therefore, in order to not fall into the seductive traps of Theological Unity, Platonic Universals, Kantian

as were shown during the oral presentation on September 5, 2003, in Nafplion, Greece. The specialised research I have been conducting is on Italian migration to the Americas between 1870 and 1913.

³ But before Latin, the Indo-european root has the sense of “to change,” and, later, “to depart.” The semantic envelope broaches the sense also of “going off,” “to wander,” as in the Latin *errare*. For a broader discussion, see Carravetta 1995.

Transcendentals or Hegelians Absolutes, we will also have to keep in mind the *actual concrete interpretations of these phenomena*, that is to say, the very fact that the reasons people migrate, the social role placed on people's life by demographic shifts, and their political relevance change continuously through *time and space*. Consequently, an exploration of and discussion on emigration goes hand in hand with an awareness of historical process *and* social and political transformations, while generating, metacritically, a hermeneutic geography. This may sound both sweeping and simple enough, but it is astounding how many researchers and experts speak about migration employing methodologies and concepts that are over one century old,⁴ and suffer from the limitations of certain assumptions that are no longer tenable. Hence the relevance I attribute to geographical understanding, and its cruciality in academic research, politics and education, at all levels.

Migration Today

There has been, in the last decades of the XX century, a world-wide resurgence of demographic shifts⁵; according to some estimates as many as 250 million people are abandoning their domicile.⁶ This is like the entire population of Italy, France, England, and Germany combined! It corresponds to just under 5% of the estimated world population, which gives rise to the statistical possibility of affecting the rest of the ultimately finite set of inhabitants.⁷ This global criss-crossing of paths, this traversing of/into territories, inevitably bumps into the social, political and urban dynamics of host countries, raising fears in the Euroamerican ethno-centric political and social mythologies, which are visibly under stress, and fear cracks and ruptures in

⁴ See for instance Immanuel Wallerstein's *Unthinking Social Science*, 1991.

⁵ See among others the rich documentation in Klaus Bade, *Europa in Bewegung*; King and Pinder, *The New Europe*; and various issues of *International Migration Review*.

⁶ See *The Economist*, March 31st-April 6th, 2001.

⁷ With reference to the laws of mechanics, once we attain syntony, or reinforce resonances between the oscillations of a structure or system, the entire set risks shattering.

their social fibre, let alone their traditions.⁸ America and the European Union have a migration issue: there are foreigners moving into our neighborhoods, and that creates feelings on anxiety. And although Americans and Europeans have developed sophisticated techniques of production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of goods and services in the face of change, the migration question often appears to be off the radar screen, as there is a perennial slippage or chaotic element present in migration, and no model of analysis can deal with the problem as a whole. Demographic shifts are asynchronous, differentiated, conflicting and certainly do not respond to any old fashioned idea of Unity, or Totality, or Universal Law.⁹ Or even Nation.¹⁰ Migration challenges us to think about what is the sense of Nation today, what it means for one to have a “nationality” as more and more people live and work in more than one place at a time.¹¹ Moreover, migration requires we focus on crossing borders, the problem of traversing a frontier, a barrier, going beyond some *limit* of sort. For other questions now surge to rock the Enlightenment and XIX century models of analysis we are accustomed to: Can one not have several nationalities? Can one not learn to inhabit the space-in-between, the border itself?¹² Can one not have Multiple Identities?¹³

⁸ See among others K. Bade. *Europa en movimiento*, 253 et infra, where he recalls the case of Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” discourse of 1968 concerning the feared loss of national cultural identity through the excessive increase of foreign, in this case black, immigration. Although in an era of decolonisation, many Europeans spoke against the construction of the European Union precisely on these grounds.

⁹ I have investigated in another paper (cf Carravetta 2003) how the idea of a global order, a universal law, a pan-European world, developed during the Enlightenment and culminating in the early XIX century, was put to rest after the Congress of Vienna (despite the later XIX century imperialism, which was also rooted in national identity), and re-emerged again only after World War Two.

¹⁰ Beyond the classics on nationalism, from Gellner to Smith, pertinent to our discussion is Murphy, “The Seven Pillars of Nationalism.”

¹¹ See Soysal’s *Limits of Citizenship*,

¹² See the articles by N. Alarcón and E. Bruner in Lavie and Swedenburg, *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*, Pries, *Migration and Transnational Social Space*, Bade, *Europa en Movimiento*, 323 et infra.

Or differentiated historical memories, not always coherent familiar or regional habits, practices, values? Can one not make a case for a new, and perhaps “planetary,” type of identity, such as suggested by the condition of the *mestizo*,¹⁴ a complex identitarian, anthropological and institutional dilemma? (Think of how it impacts on census data, for instance.)

Today’s emigration is other than it was yesteryear, and new critical maps are required. On a world scale, migration cannot be summed up in one word or process any longer, as migration is made up in great numbers of a variety of constituents, from skilled labor to partly educated workers, from middle class or aristocratic highly educated fascias of society that seem not too troubled by national borders - many are the people who believe that there exists an amorphous economic oligarchy running or steering world capitalism¹⁵ - to socially and politically connected interest groups, to intra-national relocations and military deportations, as well as by torrents of political refugees and victims of “ethnic” wars. All these groups are also marked by a growing number of extra-ethnic marriages, better educated than emigrants in the past, and by “feminization,” insofar as more women cross borders independently of males than ever before in history.¹⁶

Considered from a broader perspective, however, no matter what type of migrant we deal with, and no matter what country we choose

¹³ See on this Klusmeyer and Pirie’s *Membership, Migration and Identity*; Pries, *Migration and Transnational Social Space*.

¹⁴ Cf Gruzinski, *La pensée métisse*: “Que l’“hybride” et le métis puissent coexister en même temps que l’ethnique dans nos quotidiens comme sur les écrans de nos télévision n’est pas qu’un indice de la confusion qui regne dans les esprits. Le phénomène aussi l’a arition d’un “idiome planétaire.” (34). In tune with similar positions by Armando Gnisci, Homi Bhabha and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Gruzinski is countering other more traditional views on hybrid identity, such as Laplantine and Nous, *Le Métissages*, who believe that “Le métissage n’est pas la fusion, la cohésion, l’osmose, mais le confrontation et le dialogue,” on the grounds it is “une composition dont le composants gardent leur intégrité,” (10) which philosophically relies on an unshakeable idea of essential identity.

¹⁵ See for instance Joxe’s *Empire of Disorder*; Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration*, ch 10.

¹⁶ A good starting point here is Castles and Miller, *o cit.*, , 8-9 et infra.

to serve as our exemplary field, we must convene that a great many factors in our social lives will be affected by the arrival and interrelating of these “foreigners,” these “others.” Predictably, ethnocentrism and racism are exploding everywhere. This has been the case in Italy, Germany, France and England; Most recently, in Greece and Spain. Although as an automatic reflex action, humans have always been wary of “strangers,” it can be argued that as a socially concrete force in interpersonal relationships, *xenophobia* can be traced to the rise of nationalism, to the “birth of nations,” to identitarian politics. In fact, from a philosophical and historical point of view, the problem goes back at least to the XVIII century.¹⁷

To be sure, scholars and thinkers -the majority of the Post-Modern theoreticians¹⁸ - have noted and expounded upon the pervasive social crisis brought about by the decline of the humanist, European, and liberal ethos, and the necessity to reframe the problem, to seek alternative solutions. And yet, many of these critics went unheard, for their message has not slowed down the often paranoiac public rhetoric of the universal validity of theological or Enlightenment-derived legitimizing policies, has not prevented that international treaties be broken when convenient, and has not tempered economic plans that design underdevelopment and fiscal slavery right off the drawing board.¹⁹ We have too many sad instances in which people (government, citizens), at the social-political level, have not lived up to their own convictions, making discussion of ethics a deconstructive parlor game of words. Yet the hard reality remains: We still don't know how to deal with the arrival of strangers.²⁰

¹⁷ See Carravetta 2003.

¹⁸ The list is long but not too long: without mentioning any specific work, I am thinking of critics of Eurologocentrism from *within* the Euroamerican *oecumene*, Nietzsche to Foucault, Lyotard to Serres, and so on.

¹⁹ See for example Franz Hinkelammert, *El nihilismo al desnudo*.

²⁰ And then we have what in the United States we call the *nimbys*, those who preach that everyone is free or ought to be free to do as they please, as long as they stay far away from me: Not In My Backyard.

Existence and the Politics of Otherness

Against the platitudes, the indifference and the suspicion, I strongly feel that Migration, and its philosophical difference, its historical differences, and cultural heterogeneity, can point to new conceptual and therefore socio-political horizons. If we would stop considering it as *exclusively* a legal or economic problem, and think of it instead as a fundamental conceptual and defining force, primordially connected to our very existence, to being-human, our understanding could change, and perhaps would prompt more viable solutions. As I have argued elsewhere,²¹ the emigrant can be conceived as the *archetypal* stranger, the proverbial foreigner, every country's barbarian, the entry point to an understanding of alterity, and the *necessary other* for any definition of self or social-political identity. A man or a woman's cultural, better, anthropological self is intrinsically at play in the maelstrom of European constructs of identity and nationality. For it is when a foreigner moves next door with his/her different ways of speaking, dressing, cooking, praying and playing that we almost instinctively become conscious of our own very difference, of how we are who we are. Therefore, it is absolutely normal at first impact to retreat, reassess and take stock of *our own* values. It is almost a biological response, an instinct. My point, however, is that we ought not react instinctively to the presence of foreigners, not at least in terms of acquired and automated *prejudices*, but, rather, act in a *conscious* manner, after a minute or two of reflection, in order to make a correct or adequate *judgment*. And I believe it is this very experience which ought to make us aware that, not being alone in the world, not being the only ones who eat drink work and wish to live peacefully, a minimum effort is needed to construe a flexible social identity, and therefore a policy, a set of principles that can accommodate both of us, me and my funny-looking neighbor. Even when you factually know very little about them.²² And

²¹ See my "Viaggio," in Lucio Saviani, ed., *Segnalibro*, 1995.

²² In a World Studies class I team-taught at Queens College with my colleague Jack Zevin, we distributed about ten different photographs taken from the Ellis Island archive and asked students to identify or characterize the people. After initial resistance that ranged from their not being experts in anthropology, or photography, or history, or folklore, we suggested that they still attempt a description as if each were a photograph of a new

this will impact on how we even look at the problem. For instance, we have to revisit the by now abundant literature on the reasons people migrate.

Leaving Home

Why do people migrate? Summing up excellent studies on the subject,²³ and relying as well on my experience as an educator on a campus in which more than 50% of the students are born outside the United States, we can come up with a substantial list: Epidemics and natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes need no explanation. Unemployment, Under-employment, Oppressions of various types, Invasions, War, Financial shocks that bring bankruptcy, Professional relocations, Possibility or Need to complete or pursue higher education degrees, may be placed under the umbrella of economic, and political forces. Then there are personal or family motivated reasons, such as the desire to join family members who emigrated at an earlier time, psychological pressure to simply “get out,” and personal ambition to make a better life elsewhere. There are countless tales of family dramas involving someone having to abandon family friends and

neighbour, clearly from another country, who might have moved next door, and they wanted to tell their friends about it over the phone. Within minutes they described, using everyday language, the probable origins of the immigrants based on hair styles, dress, facial expressions, posture, and other details. Finally we prompted them to take a chance and attribute a provenance, social class, attitude, years in which the photos might have been taken and reasons for their ending up on a ship directed to New York. Although their characterisation was not exact, they were not too far off. But the most important aspect is that at the end of the lesson they felt less challenged, or alienated, by these “strange” people, and empowered by the fact that they had, in their cultural unconscious, enough signs and indices to be able to look at the “other” with a reflective and to all accounts positive disposition. The aim was to shift from knee-jerk prejudice to reasoned evaluation, from instinctive distrust or fear to calm assessment. It was a first step, we thought.

²³ I will make references only to a few, such as Portes and Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, Keridis et al, *New App roaches to Balkan Studies*, Reimers, *Still the Golden Door* and once again Klaus Bade.

native town to embark toward unknown lands.²⁴ What is most interesting at a social and historical level, however, is how over the centuries, at strategic moments emigration was considered both a boon and a disgrace for the sending country (or province, or town), at other times it was criminalized, yet at other moments it was promoted and advertised by agents from the receiving country. But in the last twenty or thirty years, it has increasingly coincided with bad economic policies in the sending country, political or military oppression, ethnic conflict, loss of traditional microeconomic or small scale production and commerce under the onslaught of globalization. All in all, we have before us a variety of reasons which impact on people whose identities, potential for negotiating the journey, and prospects of success once at their destination vary considerably.

In-between: Typologies of the Travelers

But now let us go back for a moment and rethink something else. If migration is to be understood in terms of movement, of crossings, of journeying, but with specific determinations, as we saw above, which require we look again at what happens *between* origins and destination, and especially the latter, we might learn something by focusing on the different kinds of travelers there are, strong in the belief that if we know what characteristics to attribute to the traveler, we might be in a better position to deal with them both in terms of ethics and politics, and in terms of attitude and policy, when they arrive in the host territory. One study from a few years ago listed fifteen types (see Chart 1).

FIFTEEN TYPES OF TRAVELERS	
Philip L. Pearce	
Traveler Category	The Fifteen Clearest Role-Related Behaviours (in order of relative importance)
Tourist	Takes photos, buys souvenirs, goes to famous places, stays briefly in one place, does not understand the local people.
Traveler	Stays briefly in one place, experiments with local food, goes to famous places, takes photos, explores places privately.

²⁴ This is especially true of migration narratives from the Mediterranean basin, the southeastern countries of Europe, eastern Europe and the Balkans in the second half of the XIX and first decades of the XX centuries.

Holidaymaker	Takes photos, goes to famous places, is alienated from the local society, buys souvenirs, contributes to the visited economy.
Jet-setter	Lives a life of luxury, concerned with social status, seeks sensual pleasures, prefers interacting with people of his/her own kind, goes to famous places.
Businessperson	Concerned with social status, contributes to the economy, does not take photos, prefers interacting with people of his/her own kind, lives a life of luxury.
Migrant	Has language problems, prefers interacting with people of his/her own kind, does not understand the local people, does not live a life of luxury, does not exploit the local people
Conservationist	Interest in the environment, does not buy souvenirs, does not exploit the local people, explores places privately, takes photos.
Explorer	Explores places privately, interested in the environment, takes physical risks, does not buy souvenirs, keenly observes the visited society.
Missionary	Does not buy souvenirs, searches for the meaning of life, does not live in luxury, does not seek sensual pleasures, keenly observes the visited society.
Overseas Student	Experiments with local food, does not exploit the people, takes photos, keenly observes the visited society, takes physical risks.
Anthropologist	Keenly observes the visited society, explores places privately, interested in the environment, does not buy souvenirs, takes photos.
Hippie	Does not buy souvenirs, does not live a life of luxury, is not concerned with social status, does not take photos, does not contribute to the economy.
International athlete	Is not alienated from own society, does not exploit the local people, does not understand the local people, explores places privately, searches for the meaning of life.
Overseas Journalist	Takes photos, keenly observes the visited society, goes to famous places, takes physical risks, explores places privately.
Religious pilgrim	Searches for the meaning of life, does not live a life of luxury, is not concerned with social status, does not exploit the local people, does not buy souvenirs.

From The Social Psychology of Tourist Behavior, 1982.

I am not in agreement with all of the given characterization, especially when it includes as an index how much given travelers “understand the local people,” which is a highly subjective aspect. Also, as the literature on the subject makes abundantly clear, the category of “migrant” itself has in fact several subsets, from the more classic one of *labor migrants*, to *professional immigrants*, *entrepreneurial immigrants*, and finally to *seasonal migrants*, distinctions that play a key role in historical

and economic research,²⁵ and therefore in the everyday encounters that validate both ethics and politics. Moreover, today to this phenomenology I would add such categories as *merchants, ambassadors, attachés, spies, sailors, scientists, high profile intellectuals*, and even *couples eloping*. Utilizing the same descriptive approach, it becomes clear that a merchant, for instance, would primarily seek to understand the commercial codes, marketing patterns, and even lifestyles of the host country, a sailor may be interested primarily in places to rest, have fun or meet people, and an intellectual would seek the universities, the museums, the foundations, the publishers, the bookstores or other “cultural” aspects beyond the mere surfaces and rhythms of the new city or country.

A discussion focused on the journeying itself must take into account the fact that the motivations for traveling, the choice of destination, the means deployed to achieve the passage, and the expectation upon arrival are hardly comparable, as spies, intellectuals and merchants typically inhabit radically different social contexts. Although the role-related behavior descriptions of the above set turn out to be very useful in making us zero in on specific potential problems that anyone might encounter when on foreign soil -starting with passports, visas, transportation and a suitable abode- we cannot but notice they all can illuminate us in an understanding of the *self* of the traveler as it was *before* the journey and as it remains *after its return*, that is, these categories concern people who do leave to go abroad, in a different elsewhere, but also implicitly return home, for they are *viators* who do not leave for good. Upon embarking, they would more likely say *arrivederci*, not *addio*.

It is evident that from the perspective of a positivistic, statistics-driven, “objectifying” social science, the migrant is simply one among many other types, an analogue or parallel to the other travelers. But in our view, the migrant is the greater category of which these types of travelers and border crossers are specific instances. In fact Pearce did not consider those people whose traveling is informed and triggered

²⁵ In the social sciences, the push-pull theory of migration, based almost exclusively on the dynamics of economic factors, on labour needs in one country and surplus of “hands” in another, has been a main tenet for interpretation since the late XIX century. However, as we will have occasion to mention further down, this is too simplistic and in need of serious revision.

by social unrest, economic straits, legal difficulty and political and military aggression, as we saw when considering the reasons why people embark upon the journey. But there are other types of travelers, and to add to the list, such as: *runaways*, *fugitives*, *evacuees*, *deportees*, *hobos*, *vagabonds*, *gypsies*, *romas*, *slaves*, *pirates*, *nomads*, *adventurers*, *conquerors*, *pioneers*, *exiles*, *refugees*, *asylees*, *expatriates*, and various *ethnic diasporas*,²⁶ all of which have this in common: they are more *relevant to the country of destination* than the country of origin. This fundamental aspect has not been studied enough. These travelers are going somewhere for good, they will carry a baggage of cultural habits and memories, no doubt, but they typically have no intention of returning (or not for a long time). Taking each category up briefly, it can be seen that: *runaways*, *fugitives* (and *escapees*), whether from a tyrannical family, or strict laws and inevitably therefore prisons and jails, will challenge any established order and their journeying will occur under cover, in constant hiding, in constant fear of being apprehended. *Evacuees* are made travelers either when natural disaster strikes, or when government, the military usually, impose mass relocations in view of some terrible conflict that has happened or is about to happen. Situation is different for a *deportee*, who on the basis of not meeting some protocol, or having broken the law while not yet an official citizen, is sent back to a “home country” from which probably he had escaped or emigrated. *Hobos* and *vagabonds* are not to be confused with *gypsies* and *romas*, who have a more layered social and genealogical identity, and who travel as (small) groups, have families, and oral traditions; hobos and vagabonds are more likely to be dissatisfied loners who hang their hat wherever they can find a place to eat or sleep, and whose social bonds or sense of belonging to any strata of society are tenuous at best. *Nomads* can be understood anthropologically, especially in pre-industrial revolution contexts, who move with their food source, cyclically. The

²⁶ See for instance Chaliand and Rageau, *The Penguin Atlas of Diasporas*, which graphically and dramatically illustrates twelve different group relocations on the globe (Jewish, Armenian, Gypsy, Black, Chinese, Indian, Irish, Greek, Lebanese, Palestinian, Vietnamese & Korean [under the same heading!]) but somehow failed to include the greatest peacetime exodus of one ethnic-national group in modern European history, that of the Italians to the Americas, between 1880-1913 (and which resumed after WWII): I suppose it is a question of how we define “diaspora.”

arrival of national or regional boundaries and civil codes and policies usually cuts or limits their range of movement, and in Euroamerica they are slowly vanishing (except as metaphors for artistic vagrancies and existential alienation). There is little to be said of *slaves* which does not risk exploding into a wholesale condemnation of how political and economic powers have historically betrayed religious and ethical principles, and permanently blemished plain human dignity. It has existed since time immemorial, and is perhaps only a step above anthropophagy. However, whereas cannibalism has all but been eradicated and mass slavery outlawed at different times in the known world, it is still practiced by individuals and criminal organizations that know no country or principles beyond profit. To the chagrin of enlightened ethicists and of decent people everywhere, the latest manifestation, even in Europe and the United States, is a scourge hitting children, women, and the “wretched” of the earth. These travelers, objectified and vilified and abused to no end, do nevertheless transfer ideas, beliefs, and values from place to place, and certainly contribute to the differentiation of the human gene pool. *Pirates* are also travelers, not particularly bound to any territory or political configuration, and to the degree that they have been nearly eliminated, they can be considered the forerunners of more “acceptable” types, at least historically, such as *adventurers* and *explorers*, who managed to earn respectability once they put their journeying to the service of special interest groups and governments. Much like missionaries, explorers historically have been the avant-garde of their country’s later unfolding of occupation and colonization. Of *conquerors* we also need to say little, as they would compel me expand these remarks to consider the entire enterprise of the birth of empires and nations.²⁷ *Pioneers* have become mythic, for their adventures in search of greener pastures have been made synonymous with a positive aspect of the civilizing compulsion, and legitimation, to occupy new lands and deal in the most acceptable way with the people encountered in the new lands. It is also an ambivalent category, like that of explorers, insofar as what is a pioneer to

²⁷ The historical atlas of migrations mentioned above is by and large a graphic representation of countless incursions, occupations, crusades and military conquests that affect every aspect of any one culture or civilisation. As we will see below, these “demographic shifts” (I couldn’t find a more “neutral” expression) are really at the core of social and historical process.

one group, is an invader, or conqueror, to another. Much more press has been allotted to the *exiles*, which Edward Said says it is “strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Of course, the exile is generally not to be confused with the wretched of the earth (though he may sympathize with and fight for them), and they certainly can pen down in elegant prose their plight. Its origins go back to the ancient Greek practice of banishment of a *persona non grata* from the *polis*, which symbolically was worse punishment than prison or death. In fact exile makes sense only in a political realm. The mythology goes that the achievement of exiles are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. But that’s only partially true, because they continue to live with their body in one place and their minds in their *patria*, and most of the time do manage to “return.”²⁸ *Refugees* are also a very special kind of traveler, and it can be argued they are a creation of the twentieth-century state. Next to slavery, it is the most disgraceful condition humans are subjected to and should make all lofty moralizing and politically-correct speeches about universal human values shut up with shame for a while. I know of no religious or ethical principle that has advocated or legitimated it. But certainly political and military power of various denominations are behind it. In fact the word “refugee” has become almost exclusively a political one, and it conjures up spectacles of large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent local and international assistance. In the United States, after

²⁸ Unlike what takes place with the travellers we saw above, the exile’s isolation and displacement often produce, Said writes, “the kind of narcissistic masochism that resists all efforts at amelioration, acculturation and community,” but in the case of the exile it may also ignite spontaneous “defensive nationalism” and in extreme cases lead to the construction of a nation, of the “native place,” but from the outside, as it were: consider how many exiles in the XIX and XX century laboured to influence the liberation of their native countries, or the paradigmatic case Khomeini’s Iran, which is an exile’s re-construction of a caste and political theocracy, *not* of a nation as such. In other cases, exiles even work to protect or salvage the language, as is the case of the Greek poet Seferis. As the majority have always been of a higher social class, and have had access to the press, it was not difficult for exiles to be “romanticised” in the various national literatures.

1960, with fewer restrictions on immigration, the tide of immigrants from southern Europe slowly yielded to that from Asia and the Latin American countries. These latter quickly became “unwanted refugees.”²⁹ As they changed their legal status and worked out their own sense of identity, or perhaps we should say of double-identity, many of the Latinos still felt they were object of culture bias and silent discrimination. It got worse in Europe, which having been made up of sender countries for several centuries, in a few decades found itself receiving millions of new people. Through the 1990s and up to this morning, if you check the newspapers you will learn that somewhere on the globe, from the South China seas to the Caribbean, from the Mediterranean sea to the Indian ocean, there are constant reports of boatfuls of straggled people running away from political and military abuse and threats of death, searching for landfall where they might at least *survive*. And too often die in the attempt. It is a complex problem for the European Union, and it is a huge item at the United Nations; we cannot be thankful enough for the work conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees³⁰ and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as well as from a variety of similar agencies in most countries.³¹ *Expatriates* are a strange breed, but in general should not exact sympathy from the host society, as they voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal reasons or in view of a particular idea of social status. “Hemingway and Fitzgerald were not forced to live in France” writes Said. Similarly, and to give another example, in post-WWII Italy, many intellectuals who sought to improve their chances at a university post, or scope and climb the social ladder out of personal ambition, commercial interests, and occasionally class pressures, or political tensions, left the boot and sailed on to the Americas, constituting what has been ap-

²⁹ See Reimers, *Still the Golden Door*, ch. 6.

³⁰ As of this writing, there are 20,556,000 Persons of Concern for the UNHCR, that’s more than the entire population of sovereign nations such as Australia, Greece, Israel, Norway, Portugal, Chile, Yugoslavia. And that’s of course assuming we have data on *all* refugees, which by definition are trying not to be seen and counted.

³¹ I have to postpone to a later chapter a more detailed discussion on this most unsettling topic.

appropriately called “migrazione di lusso.” And *emigrants*? Even Edward Said is silent on this one!

Reflection

It is crucial that we are clear at both the level of sociological definition, as well as of existential-personal characterization, that *not all travelers are the same, not all migrants are the same, because not all individuals are the same*. This signals fundamental differences which scholars and policy-makers ought to take into account in their evaluations. We must reconsider again whether often the contemporary migrant might not seek a sense of reality, discover a meaningful value or sense of self, or chance upon a deeper truth, in the passages themselves. I think it can impact upon their pre-disposition upon arrival. Because the passages, the borders crossed, and the social classes visited while trampling through well-hewn and oiled categories of labor are themselves indexes of history and symbols of existence. What the entrenched, mediated, investment-capital driven and technology-dependent corporate ideology shoving globalization relentlessly down our throat really cannot accept (and will tacitly sabotage) is this: that these very people, the migrants themselves, can teach us a thing or two about human needs and about social covenants, tolerance and freedom. Because *migration is borne out of necessity, of need, not out of pleasure or sport or aggression*. Perhaps that is why they have not been allowed to speak for such a long time:³² their literature, in fact, is only now being taught in some schools. On the other hand, the accounts written by exiles and expatriates, and the practitioners of the Grand Tour -- as well as that of traditional travelers such as the explorer, the conqueror and the pioneer, -- have become a staple in journalism and humanities departments in American and European universities. Their experiences have

³² In the archival research I am conducting on Italian migration in the post-Unification decades, one of the main problems is precisely the fact that the vast majority of emigrants at the time were practically illiterate, making it impossible to recover what they had to say about the experience. This raises the hermeneutic dilemma of representation and the political issue of what it means “speaking for others.” As it turns out, it was relatively easy to downplay their relevance in the romance of unification, and to consider, for over half a century, about a fourth of the nation’s population “a people without history,” to borrow from Eric Wolf.

become metaphors, even cognitive symbols, as implied by stock expressions such as: the journey to enlightenment, the path to truth, the difficulty of crossing an obstacle in life, and so on.³³

Arrival

Let us now turn our attention to how difficult and anxiety producing life must be for someone to have to learn new languages, customs, social institutions and so on upon arrival in your neighborhood. Once again, scholars have attacked this problem strictly from the sociological and legal side, and no doubt this furnishes hard evidence of a demographic issue, one which touches upon various components of the lives of both the new arrivals and the local populations. But rather than dwelling on the modalities, which vary from country to country,³⁴ of how the newcomer engages into the host society, I would like to gloss over the less technical but in reality more complex problem of the stages the individual goes through after his/her journey. This is the classic problem of *culture shock*, which sociologists and psychologists have studied rather intensively. Let us take a quick look at some of these problems (See Chart 2.)

STAGE	PERCEPTION	EMOTIONAL RANGE	BEHAVIOR	INTERPRETATION
Contact	Differences are intriguing Perceptions are screened and selected	Excitement Stimulation Euphoria Playfulness Discovery	Curiosity Interested Assured Impressionistic	The individual is insulated in his or her own Differences as well as similarities provide rationalization for continuing confirmation of status, role, and identity.

³³ See my 1996 essay "Viaggio" for an exposition of how these travel metaphors complement the very fiber of our Western logomachia. Indeed, for the Christians life itself is but a journey (cf. Tabori: *The Anatomy of Exile*).

³⁴ Portes and Rumbaut, in *Immigrant America*, 286-87, have a chart in which there are only three types of immigrants: Manual Labour Migrants, Professionals and Entrepreneurs, and Refugees/Asylees, and for each there are descriptions concerning Mode of Entry, Legal Status, Next Legal Step, Representative Nationalities. For the situation in Greece, which has changed dramatically over the past twenty years, see Katerina Linos, "Understanding Greek Immigration Policy," in Keridis et al, *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, 309-344, and Anastasia Christou, "Geographies of place..."

Disintegration	Differences are impactful Contrasted cultural reality cannot be screened out	Confusion Disorientation Loss Apathy Isolation Loneliness Inadequacy	Depression Withdrawal	Cultural differences begin to intrude. Growing awareness of being different leads to loss of self esteem. Individual experiences loss of cultural support, lies, and misreads new cultural cues.
Reintegration	Differences are rejected	Anger Rage Nervousness Anxiety Frustration	Rebellion Suspicion Rejection Hostility Exclusive Opinionated	Rejection of second culture causes preoccupation with likes and dislikes; differences are projected Negative behavior, however, is a form of self-assertion and growing self-esteem
Autonomy	Differences and similarities are legitimized	Self-assured Relaxed Warm Empathic	Assured Controlled Independent "Old hand" Confident	The individual is socially and linguistically capable of negotiating most new and different situations; he or she is assured of ability to survive new experiences
Independence	Differences and similarities are valued and significant	Trust Humor Love Full range of previous emotions	Expressive Creative Actualizing	Social, psychological and cultural differences are accepted and enjoyed. The individual is capable of exercising choice and responsibility and able to <i>create</i> meaning for situations.

From: "THE TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCE VIEW OF CULTURE SHOCK,"
in the *JOURNAL OF HUMANIST PSYCHOLOGY*, 1975.

As can be seen at a glance, when dealing with immigrants, one must be alert to the passage not only of space, but of time, personal-social time, in the sense in which an immigrant that has just entered the host country, compared to one who has already resided there for three years, or ten years, and so on, may be susceptible to different stimuli, react in markedly different ways, and may consequently act and think in not always decipherable ways.³⁵ The range is broad and covers are-

³⁵ This is particularly noticeable in children, where a couple of years already mark a substantial difference in cognition, perception and socialisation. Consider the added problem of language, family mythologies, and "mainstreaming" in the host society. Though Portes and Rumbaut do acknowledge the psychological complexity of entering a "foreign world," (ch 5), they consider these stages only with regard to the "second generation," and dwell on the dynamics of assimilation. In this model, the immigrant lui-même literally vanishes, becomes merely a silent unrepresented worker. Today, however, as the case of the Latinos in the US and the Africans in Italy makes clear, even before their own children, the migrants themselves take

as that go from the merely personal/psychological to the cultural, from the cognitive to the political. A pondered adaptation of these stages, not always predictable not even within the same family or group, would be extremely useful to policy makers and legislators alike, who ought to shy away from one-formula-for-all-immigrants (thus flattening out their very distinct provenance and differentiated needs and desires). And this applies as well to immigration law, as one set of legal, labor and education requirements that do not include provisions for the time frame in which the person requests access to social structures and services, and does not consider age, language, religion and gender, is bound to create unnecessary and often dramatic problems.³⁶

Rethinking the Meaning of Migration

Migration is a one way trip, there is no “home” to go back to
Stuart Hall

The migrant’s journey is of a special kind. As we said at the beginning, it goes to the very bottom of the human condition. *Because it is not simply a question of relocation in space: geography is also and perhaps primarily a question of place, of domains, of dwellings* upon and around which human intercourse and institutions are created and develop. Migration scours, scrapes and rips at unseen depths of our constitution, both psychic and cultural. Too many take refuge in their own class, or bloodline, or power lineages when confronted with these unpleasant others who seek social asylum, want to work, practice strange rituals and speak undecipherable languages. In reality, though, they are simply the uncanny other, an unsettling reminder of how either we used to be, at some point in our past, or what we can become if through some act of violence, or by edict or legislation by governments, or the will of corporations (or God, always a safe choice to justify anything), the tables are turned, and find ourselves literally, not metaphorically, on the road, better, in the street. The migrant reminds us of the shad-

the mike, or the pen, and speak, and being educated can rightly claim what is equality and justice under the local laws.

³⁶ A comparative analysis of present-day Immigration policies in the major European countries would be a very useful critical exercise, and will be taken up elsewhere.

ow, the dark otherness we all conceal so well and society glosses over with reassuring panaceas or exorcizes by criminalizing or demonizing these “others.”

Much like *errare*, *migrare* is a profound component of the human psyche, it responds to the needs of the real, flesh and bones person (let’s leave the soul out of this). Behind the concrete evidence that people more and more are willing to request and adopt dual citizenship, there lurks the possibility, at a more abstract level, that it is feasible to theorize a dual, co-enabling ontological-political structure: I have a right to be rooted, but I am also free to move about and onward as I please, or more dramatically, as I need to. We must be aware of the fact that philosophical, psychological and political solutions to the question of rootedness, which has historically yielded claims to primacy and privileges of all sorts, slide quickly into identity issues (of self, of nation, of class) and spawn self-fulfilling prophecies and often bizarre social habits. Indeed the discourse of roots and genealogies has time and again proved to be arbitrary, insidious, and exclusivist. It has also proved to be tragic when a certain idea of the State supplants, subjugates or informs in various guises all other human bonds, civil structures, spaces for interpersonal realization in the name of saving, bolstering, defending one’s supposedly self-evident legitimacy for occupying a given territory, or staying planted in one place.

***Migrare* as Constitutive of Human History**

The anthropological and historical record does show that humanity is forever on the move:³⁷ there has always been a need to search for

³⁷ See the article by Kingsley Davis, “The Migrations of Human Population,” where we read: “Human beings have always been migratory...Excluding Antarctica, Paleolithic man made his way to every major part of the globe. Except for species dependant on him, he achieved a wider distribution than any other terrestrial animal. Since this propensity to migrate has persisted in every epoch, its explanation requires a theory independent of any particular epoch.” This supplements the recent study, Luca Cavalli-Sforza, *The Great Human Diasporas*, and confirms William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*.

safer or bigger and better pastures. [see maps at end of article].³⁸ It was only when walls were erected, and territories had to be divided and adjudicated, that people lost their freedom to travel, and their capacity to cross the seas, rivers, mountains and bridges, in order to try to be better off elsewhere on the planet. These boundaries or definitions set up the premises that allowed groups of individuals to identify themselves against the other's difference.

But were things always this way?

Historian William McNeill makes it clear that polyethnicity -and by extension, I shall argue, hybridization and *Métissage*- have really been the rule in history, not the exception. Speaking to a Canadian audience, he says:

My fundamental thesis is that the Canadian public experience of polyethnicity on the one hand and of ambivalence towards a richer and more powerful neighbor on the other is shared with most of the rest of the world throughout recorded history. *Marginality and pluralism were and are the norm of civilized existence*. Metropolitan centers were and are necessarily exceptional, though they do command more than their share of attention in surviving records. And ethnic and political unity, even among barbarians, was often illusory and always fragile, because military conquests and other encounters perennially resulted in mixing one sort of people of others (14-15, my emphasis).³⁹

³⁸ In both the Nafplion and the Rome presentations, 40 maps were screened to make the concluding points.

³⁹ See William McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*, 6. Further down the historian writes: "it is my contention that civilised societies have nearly always subordinated some human groups to others of a different ethnic background, thereby creating a laminated polyethnic structure. The idea that a government rightfully should rule only over citizens of a single ethnos took root haltingly in western Europe, beginning in the late middle ages; it got into high gear and became fully conscious in the late eighteenth century and flourished vigorously until 1920; since which time the ideal has unquestionably begun to weaken in western Europe, where it began, but in other parts of the world, especially in the ex-colonial lands of Africa and Asia, it has continued to find fertile ground." (6-7).

The argument he makes is that at the origin of the nation-state there is the paradigm of the city-state, where historically it was possible – numerically, economically, practically- to have a rather homogeneous group of people sharing in the rights, privileges and cultural identities of the *polis*.⁴⁰ But modern nations have nothing to do with ancient city-states. The Romans, in order to control a large sprawling empire, developed the concept of *citizenship* (for certain classes, to be sure), allowed freedom of religion (as long as the state was not threatened), and demanded adherence to their institutions, but individual freedom of speech, creed and mobility were pretty much left alone. Pluralism and multiculturalism are not our recent invention.⁴¹ Moreover, and a key observation to bear in mind, the main social characteristics developed by and representing Modern Europe –freedom to contest the ruler, Christian values, secularization, capitalism, individualism⁴²– were unknown in ancient Greek and Roman times. From another perspective, if we integrate McNeill’s insights into the diachronic population dynamics (and the variety of social arrangements it can lead into), first with the work of geneticist Luca Cavalli-Sforza and then with the insights of cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz on the constantly changing nature of the very idea of what makes a cul-

⁴⁰ Later in the essay, McNeill reiterates: “Metropolitan centres were and are necessarily exceptional, though they do command more than their share of attention in surviving records. And ethnic and political unity, even among barbarians, was often illusory and always fragile, because military conquests and other encounters perennially resulted in mixing one sort of people to others.” (*ib.*, 14-15).

⁴¹ I am generalizing out of necessity. As expression of diversity and plural cultural discourse, the identities of subgroups in ancient times and through the Renaissance were always marginal, disempowered and necessarily abstract, having to be first legitimated by ruling elites. It is only in the last two-hundred years that specific claims of personal, ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity entered the arena of social discourse at large. But this could only happen in democratic states, where the claims of recognition and empowerment – typically fought against residual racisms and xenophobias --go hand in hand with the possibility of redistribution of goods, services and access to previously closed sectors of the commonwealth. See S. Benhabib, “The Liberal Imagination and the Four Dogmas of Multiculturalism.”

⁴² See Henri Mendras, *L’Europe des Européens*, 12-13, and Carravetta, *La questione dell’identità nella formazione dell’Europa*.

ture (and therefore Italian, or Greek or Armenian or Palestinian culture), then we may come up with an understanding that *change, and movement, and heterogeneity are more intrinsic and fundamental than stability and homogeneity*. If globalization and post-Modern capitalism are dismantling the certitudes and guarantees of the Welfare State, which includes stability of domicile and labor and equal representation before the law, then we ought to look at how people managed before the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, on the one hand, and at the lives of all these different transnational travelers, on the other, in order to grasp what it means to negotiate reality, to *survive* first and then manage to *live* with constantly shifting sets of social, linguistic, and economic forces.

Beyond Roots

Whether emigrants, refugees, exiles, or expatriates, these border-crossers, boundary-breaking individuals, these intercultural violators are constantly moving “according to a different calendar,” their lives being generally “nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal,” marked by periodic bouts against authority, or limits, or what will now prevent the passage. Not to mention another aspect which we have not addressed but which plays a key role in orienting policy makers, and that is the situation of return migration.⁴³ Nevertheless, being that there really is never a true “going back,” even the notions of being *deraciné*, uprooted, begins to lose its exemplary value, spun as they are on the metaphoric of being “ejected” from one’s Home, or “fatherland.” This is a difficult idea to subject to radical hermeneutic, but it must be done. Writing in the middle of World War Two, in occupied France, Simone Weil wrote: “To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”⁴⁴ I think we ought to modify that by asking: can one not have several roots? In fact, in the same chapter, elaborating what she means by rootedness, Weil cannot but come up with the same conclusion:

A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in

⁴³ See R. King, “Generalisations from the history of return migration,” and K. Bade, *Europa en movimiento*.

⁴⁴ Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, 41.

living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings. Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw well-nigh the whole of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a natural part (41, my emphasis).

Weil's notion that uprootedness is "the modern version of tragedy" must be read in the context of an imposed or violent extirpation from one's "natural" – which may mean "habitual," it does not necessarily mean "eternal" – environment. In line with what we observed above concerning the traits of certain types of forced immigrations, uprootedness is closer in meaning to the condition of the refugee, or the hostage in one's land:

Uprootedness occurs whenever there is a military conquest, and in this sense conquest is nearly always an evil. There is the minimum of uprootedness when the conquerors are migrants who settle down in the conquered country, intermarry with the inhabitants and take root themselves. Such was the case with the Hellenes in Greece, the Celts in Gaul and the Moors in Spain. But when the conqueror remains a stranger in the land of which he has taken possession, uprootedness becomes an almost mortal disease among the subdued population. It reaches its most acute stage when there are deportations on a massive scale, as in Europe under the German occupation, or along the upper loop of the Niger, or where there is any brutal suppression of all local traditions, as in the French possessions in the Pacific (42).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ There are therefore different kinds of migrations or relocations, at both the social and ethical level. Some do cause havoc and humiliate the inhabitants of the host region or country, others do not or go about it in more tolerant, integrative, positive way. The literature on post-colonial critique of the past twenty years ought to take that into account, before generalizing about the meaning of colonialism. This will be developed in another paper.

Although throughout recorded history there have always been struggles, or wars, whose primary motivation was possession of land and the wealth it contained above and below ground, the legitimizing ideologies have consistently been anchored upon notions of primacy, national or cultural superiority, some well-construed myth of belonging, or divine right, or manifest destiny. In more recent Euroamerican history, there arose the notion of “rights” and “fairness” or “justice,” but this did not compel the enlightened people of the more civilized nation-states to avert the ravages of laissez-faire capitalism, colonization and two monstrous world wars. When some philosophers in the earlier part of the twentieth century said that the same logic and the same absolute (indeed: totalizing) convictions that gave us the steam engine and electricity and nuclear power is the same logic that justified genocides and unparalleled deportations, politologists, ethicists and the educated upper classes gave a smirk and confined such hypotheses to the back shelves of deserted libraries, together with the mutterings of poets, visionaries, and crackpots.⁴⁶ The possibility of accepting the fact that migrations, and all the subcategories glossed above, are not something epiphenomenal, or an aberration, or a threat; and that change, metamorphosis, and variations in ethical approaches and economic perspectives are “normal,” inexorably intertwined and ultimately something good, has too often given some people, and individuals within certain groups or classes, the shivers.

Beyond Identity

To stay at the philosophical level, one first casualty would be the notion of a unitary identity. It may work in formal logic or mathematics, but does not have to obtain in psychology or in political theory. Contradiction as a principle of determining what is right or wrong, and what is coherent or not, in any absolute way, is really not useful anymore. Does this necessarily render the notion of identity irrelevant? less compelling? less “strong?” Yes, but if we want to live with our newly arrived neighbor –or if we want to be accepted by others

⁴⁶ One is reminded of Michael Moore’s film *Bowling in Columbine*, when he interviewed an executive of the rocket and weapons facility just miles away from where the high school shooting spree occurred. Asked whether he saw a connection between the existence of a large weapons plant and the obsessions with guns in the nearby community, the executive said he did not.

when it is we who travel elsewhere— what is desirable, what is in order, is a weakening of the idea of Subject, a less rigid idea of Self, a more flexible conception of origins and destinations, and a more tolerant and accepting social system of values. In this perspective, we do not have to resort to weapons, or walls, or exclusivist foreign policies,⁴⁷ or preferential immigration policies.

If we want to look at this from an anthropological or even biological perspective, existential changes such as are entailed in readapting religious and ethical patterns when relocating to different environments, inter-ethnic marriages, and a variety of boundary-crossing are ways in which humanity regenerates itself, and keeps its vitality and creativity. The fact that neoliberalism, globalization and superpower politics are utilizing a worn out set of stylemes, a dualistic logic, a disemboweled pseudo-religious Platonism, plainly unsustainable myths of nationality and security,⁴⁸ and, at the same time, capitalizing (!) on the fragmentation, dissemination, and uprootedness, does not invalidate my argument: rather, for it points precisely to where the problem lies. Migration is persistent through recorded world time, and admittedly it has had some ugly effects when the “encounter” was fraught with fear and greed (such as during explorations). Today, however, it is at the mercy of a practically centre-less power mechanism. But I say, it will not stop human metamorphoses. All empires have fallen, and power has again and again devised configurations appropriate to the situation. For that, politologists ought to revisit and readapt a cyclical theory of history. Yet people have moved, have transited, through the cycles. Semper.

The primordial shiftless hunter-gatherer has undergone incredible changes from the Neolithic age to today, and at an increasing rate of

⁴⁷ We have all heard, in the wake of growing distrust of immigrants and diffuse xenophobia, of a growing “fortress mentality” in Europe. For an analysis, see Saskia Sassen, *Guests and Aliens*, and Kristen Hill Maher’s review in *SALS Review*. The idea of “walls,” or “fences,” is another disgraceful reaction to the inevitable if not necessary porosity of borders that warrants freedom of movement. I suppose the fall of the Berlin wall was not enough of a major epochal symbolic event, as some Republicans in the US have actually suggested building a wall along the Rio Grande to keep illegal aliens out.

⁴⁸ See among many voices on this subject, B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, J. Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World*, A. Roy, *Power Politics*.

speed. It is crucial we recall that human nature itself cannot be defined without reference to a *where* and a *when* it is we are talking about. And what *place* (Bhabha) or *situation* (Sartre) the persons involved are in. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz puts it:

There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture...we are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture -and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it: Dobuan and Javanese, Hopi and Italian, upper-class and lower class, academic and commercial.⁴⁹

Vicariously readapted to the age of full blown technocracy, virtual capitalism, shrunken distances, a greater array of interstices, strange new crossroads and bridges, highways, connectors of various styles and substance, the question of dealing with migration flows is much more complex than statistical analyses of labor and market dynamics can yield. Yet I hold that we must begin by concentrating first on the travelling itself, on the destination much more than the origins, on the experiences of the bridging, and on the modalities (dangers, resolutions, accounts) of the crossing of the various borders, and the metamorphoses of character, in the psyche itself: for that is what ought to inform our readings and reflections, our social policies, our attitudes toward strangers.⁵⁰ And as a result question and re-write the home-

⁴⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 49.

⁵⁰ Migration *within* a country also ought not be studied as something separate or different from the more obvious trans-national, inter-national movements. It is said that the average American relocates every five to six years. Indeed, as a book by Vance Packard from my college days put it, right in the title, we are "*A nation of strangers*." Given that the laws of the land, the language, and the social infrastructure is more or less the same, one would think that no major problems exist in the case of intra-national demographic shifts. But much like what takes place when Italian Southerners migrate to northern Italy, and American Northeasterns migrate to the South and Southwest, other elements surface which are not that different from those encountered by a Vietnamese in Florida or a Senegalese in Lombardy: distrust, racism, exclusion, alienation, resistance to social-communal integration, scapegoating, and so on. The chart on culture shock ought to be com-

spun universalistic mythologies we live by, beginning with unconscious or unquestioned theories of homogenization, of generalized identity, in short, continue unwittingly to believe in the melting pot theory of assimilation. It is late in the day for these philosophemes.

Provisional Conclusions

Immigrants make poor nationalists, it is well known, but that's because they dispose of a stereoscopic visions,⁵¹ a multilayered cultural unconscious, a cognitive flexibility that is automatically not restrictive and exclusive, but which is existentially primed to allow for the reception of differences and otherness. I argue that this may actually be the sole ontogenetic precondition, the primordial drive through the ages: *change, travel* and *metamorphoses*, not repetition, predictability and therefore manipulation and abuse by those who wield power and legitimize it to their taste and needs. And this entails, for us listeners to the stories of the migrants,⁵² that we develop a more tolerant, self-aware and

plemented with one reflecting the various Stages of How Locals Receive the Strangers (or Foreigners).

⁵¹ Writes Henry Grunwald in his autobiography, *One Man's America*, 43: "Every immigrant leads a double life. Every immigrant has a double identity and a double vision, suspended between an old and a new home, an old and a new self. The very notion of a new home is absurd, as impossible as the notion of new parents. One's parents *are* who they are: one's home *is* what it is. It is one's birthplace, ratified by memory. It is the nursery wallpaper, the family dining room, the stories and songs that surround one's growing up yet home, like parentage, must be legitimised through love; otherwise it is only an accident of geography or biology. Most immigrants to America received little love in their homelands or saw it betrayed; whether they starved in Ireland, or were persecuted in czarist Russia and Nazi Germany, or, later, were driven into the sea in Vietnam, they did not abandon their countries – their countries abandoned them. In America they sought not only a new life, but a new love." I would like to thank Lisa Vaia for bringing this book to my attention.

⁵² The experience of the new immigrants toward "advanced" Western countries should give us a renewed interest in re-reading the tales of a former generation, despite the uncanny sense of déjà-vù which colours the reading. As we observed above, with today's greater access to education, immigrants can now speak on their own behalf. As Bharati Mukherjee put it:

generous interpretation of other people's "strangeness," that we renew an ethical sense of co-participation -to counter or even subdue the excesses of competition- in the social project, and teach greater sensitivity when listening to the allegories of silence, the transfigurations of the unsayable, or the experiences of rebirth.

Thought of in this fashion, migration can provide us with a philosophical notion from which -or with respect to which- we can continue to demolish the Great Metaphysical Absolutes of the pre-Moderns which still linger in post-Enlightenment times, those that continue to harbor crude and tragic contradictions and which recent media history has shown to be entirely vacuous, public lies. This includes the dogmas of the contending religious faiths: after all, the obsessive preoccupation with Origins and Primacy and Election would here be subjected to a powerful critique, because realistically speaking the origins of these theologemes are buried in obscurity, the conditions of today's societies and the migrations that inform them are not even comparable to those of a thousand, or even of a hundred years ago, the self-legitimizing mythologies are no longer or are only partly relevant and inevitably distorted, and whether one believes in progress or not, modern science has made *some* strides in dissolving self-serving universalistic convictions. In short, living according to time-worn and hazy beliefs, and seeking a justification in the literal reading of ancient texts, is truly untenable, undemocratic, definitely not conducive to peaceful civil inter-national co-existence. Tolerance is perhaps one of the few notions developed in the early modern era that ought to be protected and fine-tuned according to place and time, on the basis of specific needs and dynamics in individual territories, in the XXI century.

Migration teaches that history changes, that values are never suprahistorical, that what applied once in time (say: antiquity) or space (say: the home country), perhaps no longer applies, or would actually gain from being modified, from being brought up to date to confront problems that were unthought-of, unimaginable a generation, a centu-

"They're bursting with stories, too many to begin telling. They've lived through centuries of history in a single lifetime -village-born, colonised, traditionally raised, educated. What they've assimilated in 30 years has taken the West 10 times that number of years to create. Time travel is a reality."

ry ago.⁵³ Migrating on the other hand is the best image for an existence profoundly informed by change, transit, uncertainty, fear at times, but also freedom, dreams, excitement, fuelling a need to discover, stimulating the necessity to stay forever on the alert, aiding the capacity for renewal, developing scenario for possible worlds, new or more useful theories of representation and participation, and for many groups, even begin to reconfigure their disappeared past. This is a condition which, beyond economic fears and personal hardships, is marked by a profound inner rift, an unnarratable experience...but one which somehow must be told.

Again. And again.

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⁵³ See discussion in Portes and Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, 8-14 et infra, on how comparing today's migration to that of a century ago requires entirely different explanations. An entreat to do so came also from D. Massey, "To Study Migration Today, Look to a Parallel Era," which begins by pointing out how international migration has been considered marginal by the majority of experts: "Out of about 2,500 demographers in the United States, only about 120, including students, express an interest in immigration." (84).

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