Proceedings from the International,
Multi-lingual Colloquium,

"Canada and the Americas:
Multidisciplinary Perspectives
on Transculturality"

Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada
April 24-25, 2008

Actes du Colloque
International Multi-langue,
"Le Canada et les Amériques: Perspectives
Pluri-disciplinaires sur la Tansculturalité"

Actas del Coloquio Internacional Multilingue,
"El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas
Multidisciplinarias sobre la Transculturalidad

Editor/Éditrice/Editora: Afef Benessaiah

INTRODUCTION

Proceedings from the International, Multi-lingual Colloquium, "Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality", Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada, April 24-25, 2008

'Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality', an international multi-lingual colloquium held at the Glendon campus of York University in Toronto, April 24 and 25, 2008. The Conference offered an inter-disciplinary intellectual space aimed at favoring knowledge transfers, research collaboration, and the strengthening of inter-institutional partnerships between Canadian researchers, and scholars from Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference offered five consecutive panels in four languages (simultaneously translated), where the following key themes were explored: 'Towards a Transcultural Indigeneity'; 'Experiences of Translation across the Americas'; 'Interculturality, Transculturality and Globalization'; 'Migration in Global Cities'; and 'Hemispheric Imaginaries: creolité, mestizaje, americanidade or hybridity?'.

— Afef Benessaieh, Editor

Actes du Colloque International Multi-langue, « Le Canada et les Amériques: Perspectives Pluri-disciplinaires sur la Tansculturalité », Collège Universitaire Glendon, Université York, Toronto, Canada, 24-25 avril 2008

'Le Canada et les Amériques: perspectives pluri-disciplinaires sur la transculturalité', un colloque international multi-lingue qui a eu lieu au campus Glendon de l'Université York à Toronto les 24 et 25 avril 2008. La Conférence a offert un espace intellectuel hautement interdisciplinaire favorisant les transferts de savoirs, la collaboration en recherche et la consolidation de partenariats inter-institutionnels entre chercheurs canadiens, et de l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes. La conférence a offert cinq tables rondes consécutives en quatre langues (traduction simultanée), au sein desquels les thèmes suivants ont été explorés: 'Vers une indianité transculturelle'; 'Expériences de traduction dans les Amériques'; 'Interculturalité, transculturalité et mondialisation'; 'Migrations et cités globales'; 'Imaginaires hémisphériques: créolité, mestizaje, americanidade ou hybridité?'.

— Afef Benessaieh, éditrice

Actas del Coloquio Internacional Multilingüe, "El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas Multidisciplinarias sobre la Transculturalidad", Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canadá, 24-25 de abril del 2008

'Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas multi-disciplinarias sobre la transculturalidad', un congreso internacional multilingüe que se llevó a cabo en el campus de Glendon de la Universidad York (Toronto), en abril 24-25 del 2008. El evento ofreció un espacio intelectual inter-disciplinario propicio para el intercambio de saberes, la colaboración con miras a la investigación y el fortalecimiento inter-institucional entre académicos del Canadá y América Latina y el Caribe. Se presentaron ponencias en cuatro idiomas organizadas temáticamente en cinco mesas redondas que abarcaron lo siguiente (traducción simultánea): 'Hacia una indigeneidad transcultural'; 'Experiencias de traducción en las Américas'; 'Interculturalidad, transculturalidad y globalización'; 'Migración en ciudades globales'; 'Imaginarios hemisféricos. ¿Creolité, mestizaje, americanidade o hibridez?'.

— Afef Benessaieh, Editora

ANTARES PUBLISHING HOUSE OF SPANISH CULTURE

ANTARES Publishing House of Spanish Culture was created in 2005 as a trilingual press (Spanish, English and French) that specializes in promoting Hispanic culture and literature and works in translation in the above-mentioned languages.

Our areas of publication are the following: novel, short story, poetry, cultural studies, works in translation, scholarly publications, linguistics and language acquisition, children and youth literature and pedagogy.

The trilingual nature of the Proceedings from the International Colloquium, "Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality", which took place at Glendon College, York University, (Toronto, Canada), April 24-25, 2008, is in keeping with ANTARES' mission regarding its philosophy of linguistic promotion.

— Margarita Feliciano, Editor, ANTARES

ANTARES Publishing House of Spanish Culture a été créée en 2005. ANTARES est une maison d'édition trilingue (espagnol, anglais et français) qui se spécialise dans le domaine de la diffusion culturelle et littéraire du monde hispanophone, ainsi que dans le domaine de la traduction des langues mentionnées auparavant.

Nos publications incluent le roman, le conte, la poésie, les publications académiques, la linguistique et les études du langage, la littérature pour enfants, la littérature pour la jeunesse et la pédagogie.

La nature trilingue des Actes du Colloque International, « Le Canada et les Amériques: Perspectives Pluri-disciplinaires sur la Tansculturalité », Collège Universitaire Glendon, Université York, (Toronto, Canada), 24-25 avril 2008, remplit les exigences de notre maison d'édition en ce que concerne notre philosophie de diffusion linguistique.

— Margarita Feliciano, éditrice, ANTARES

La casa editorial ANTARES Publishing House of Spanish Culture fue fundada en el año 2005. ANTARES es una casa editorial trilingüe (español, inglés, francés) especializada en la difusión cultural y literaria del mundo hispanohablante, así como en el campo de la traducción en las lenguas anteriormente mencionadas.

Nuestras áreas de publicación son las siguientes: novela, cuento, poesía estudios culturales, obras en traducción, publicaciones académicas, lingüística y aprendizaje de la lengua, literatura infantil, literatura juvenil y pedagogía.

La naturaleza trilingüe de las Actas del Coloquio Internacional, "El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas Multidisciplinarias sobre la Transculturalidad", llena los requisitos de nuestra casa editorial en cuanto a su filosofía de difusión lingüística.

— Margarita Feliciano, Editora, ANTARES

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UNDERSTANDING TRANSCULTURALITY

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ABSTRACT: *As a general introduction to the material presented in*
these conference proceedings, the main goal of the chapter is to discuss
transculturality* and locate it as a term within a multidisciplinary field
of studies, concerned with cultural interactions under globalization. It first
distinguishes transculturality from other terms used as closed equivalents
by some of the authors in this book, such as transculturation*,
multiculturalism or interculturality*. Transculturality is mostly argued
as a separate concept designating cultural processes and identity formations
not exactly captured by these alternate terms. Second, the chapter provides a
typology of approaches that use transculturality in three main perspectives:
essentialism, universalism or relativism, and pluralism. Transculturality
is posited as a relational view of cultural encounters; one that allows the
multiple cultural ascriptions experienced by individuals and communities
in highly diverse societies to be described and understood.*

Transculturality captures some of the living traits of cultural change caused by globalization in highly diverse contemporary societies. Most importantly, it offers a conceptual landscape for viewing cultures as relational webs and flows of significance in active interaction with one another (expanding on Geertz). As a provisional definition to be further explored and discussed in the coming pages, transculturality suggests departing from traditional, yet very current views on "cultures" as fixed frames, or separate islands neatly distanced and differentiated from one another. Instead, it invites, as suggested by Welsh, to view the intermingling and blurry lines between presumably distinct cultures, and carefully examines the "global situation" (following Tsing) of individuals, communities and societies, increasingly drawing from enlarged, tremendously pluralized cultural repertoires, in their everyday life practice and imaginary.

In this perspective, the present publication explores transculturality in the Americas, a continental space in which cultural diversity of South to North seems a constant imaginary, and where mobile reconfigurations from the quotidian encounter with difference are tangible prac-

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* As discussed in this chapter and subsequent chapters in this volume, the significance of this term is often debated and its usage in the present context does not necessarily coincide with its primary aception. Subsequent uses of this term will no longer be in boldface.

tice. This publication is the result of the scholarly meeting 'Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality' held at the bilingual campus of York University, Glendon College, in April 2008. The Conference had several goals, one of which was to promote a comparative dialogue about cultural diversity in the hemisphere. Another goal was to refrain from providing a pre-established definition of transculturality, thus allowing both panelists and the audience to use the term – and some of its close associates such as transculturation or interculturality – in a flexible manner, as well as to specify their interpretation if they pleased. A third goal was to hold the meeting within a multilingual, interdisciplinary framework – while constructing each panel to go beyond plain pluralism – and touch on transversal conversations that blur the lines between so called disciplines.

The Conference, hence, held four consecutive panels on some themes through which transculturality could be approached. The event commenced with the panel: "Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Transculturality", which was presented to panelists as a methodological discussion based on the terms used for qualifying culturally diverse societies. The panel was made up of a political scientist, a writer, a French studies scholar, an anthropologist and an international relations (IR) scholar. The second panel, entitled "Hemispheric Imaginaries: Créolité, Mestizaje, Americanidad or Hybridity" invited speakers to discuss identities and imaginaries of the Americas, and pursue the theme of *americanité* (*Americanness* in the continental sense). It brought together sociologists and literary studies scholars. The third panel, "Migration in Global Cities", was designed with the view in mind to discuss some of the features of the key locations where transcultural selves are most expected to feel at home: in an urban, dense nexus of social interaction and activity, marked by great cultural diversity and active migration flows. Scholars in this panel were specialists in fields that ranged from urban studies and design to political science and education. The fourth panel, "Experiences of Translation across the Americas", included a group of translation studies scholars who specialize in languages and literature from the hemisphere, and an anthropologist. An additional panel re-grouped the coordinators of each panel to deliver a short synthesis of the key points raised in their respective groups, and attempted to close the event with a sense of shared conversation, thus going beyond tremendous disciplinary, methodological or thematic diversity. With the exception of the current chapter, which was written after the Conference as an attempt to organize the proceedings around a reflection on transculturality, this book presents the material in the order in which each paper was delivered.

In order to provide the reader with a conceptual road map to ease the journey through the conference material, the main goal of this chapter is to offer an opening discussion about transculturality. In effect, it became clear throughout the conference that transculturality remained a novel, and sometimes elusive term, which many panelists and attendees cautiously considered. The term was also often used (with a few exceptions), as a close equivalent to transculturation, interculturality or multiculturalism, which is a more familiar terminology. Hence, it became even clearer that the project of discussing transculturality was just beginning, and that this conference was an important first step in establishing a multi-vocal conversation, likely to become a research agenda shared by members of an interdisciplinary working group created during the event. This first chapter, therefore, discusses transculturality by way of a continuous comparison with some of the most recurrent concepts associated with it, aiming to provide a more comprehensive set of definitions of transculturality in the second section.

TRANSCULTURATION, MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALITY

Transculturality is to some a puzzling word, semantically close to other terms used in the scientific literature about cultural diversity and historical or social change, such as transculturation, multiculturalism, or interculturality. Yet, it is a distinct concept designating different processes. Below, I examine each of these terms, specifying for each case how the concept of transculturality differs.

Transculturation was coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, and expanded on more recently by post-colonialist anthropologists, sociologists and commentators (Pratt; Butz & Besio; Millington) in order to study *zones of contact*, where culturally distinct groups and communities interact. In its origins, the term was proposed as an important alternative to *acculturation*, to study the processes of resistance, exchange and appropriation occurring between culturally differentiated populations, coming into close contact with one another since colonial times. Central to the term is the power configuration in which these contacts occur, where non-dominant groups engage in the process of appropriating and transforming – to their end – some of the cultural practices and representations of the dominant group; a process not seen as exclusively one-sided. Transculturation – as studied in its origins – was also mostly set in national locations where culturally dominant and non-dominant groups closely reflected the socio-economic divisions in the studied society; such is the case of the Cuban slavery economy that included populations of African, indigenous and European origins.

Although powerful in essence, the term did not come into use until more recently, as social and cultural anthropologists have revived it to study cultural change in post-colonial societies. In particular, Marie-Louise Pratt has adapted transculturation to a world-system reading, re-contextualizing national locations in systems of power relations between centers and peripheries. Hence, she views transculturation as "how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from the materials transmitted to them by a dominant metropolitan culture" (6); she also invites researchers to view their practice as transcultural interaction, in which they can come to be perceived and emulated by research subjects as personalizing some of the traits of the dominant metropolitan culture. In practice, the re-appropriation of the term by contemporary fieldworkers invites – among other things – an auto-ethnography, a self-reflexive and critical disposition for the researcher to place herself or himself in the larger, world-systemic power relations configuration to be studied locally.

Central to the term transculturation, and its uses, is the focus on inequalities in power distribution and configuration, where culturally dominant and subordinate groups are clearly identified. For instance, in the case of the Americas, transculturation as a concept could aptly analyze the historically sedimented interaction between socio-economically and culturally marginalized groups – such as indigenous or Afro-descendant communities – and the dominant groups of European ancestry. A second core feature of the transculturation literature is the national setting in which most studies are conducted; transculturation is largely studied in small localities such as neighborhoods or villages from given nations, in which a strong sense of "national culture" is seen as the dominant referent from which the resistance and appropriation strategies and practices of local actors are examined.

Based on these core features, the historical sedimentation of power relations between subordinate and dominant groups and national units of analyses, the concept of transculturality differs from its genealogical predecessor, placing itself within a transnational literature concerned, instead, with cultural mobility under globalization or, more simply, with how people increasingly draw from multiple cultural repertoires in their everyday life. In other terms, transculturality is not a substitute for, or a better word than transculturation; it is simply a concept that designates different processes, which are not adequately captured by the latter.

Other concepts often discussed in close relation to transculturality include multiculturalism and interculturality. The first term is more often used to characterize specific public policies for managing culturally diverse societies of the industrial world; leading case studies generally include Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom (comprehensive discussions about multicultural policies in the world are provided by UNESCO, Issues 1 and 2 and Inglis). In the Canadian context, multiculturalism has been in use since the 1970s, both as a descriptive term for qualifying cultural diversity in the population, and as a set of programmatic

measures conducted by the State to support and encourage such diversity with a non-assimila-tionist approach. The "mosaïque" or "melting-pot" acceptation of multiculturalism includes im-migration, labor market, education, public media policies, and regulations as well as support for the arts and culture, thus sustaining the general view that respect for cultural pluralism is central to Canadian culture (on Canadian multiculturalism see Heritage Canada's annual reports; see Houle for a historiography of the policy).

Regularly criticized for encouraging groups and communities to maintain and cultivate their differences instead of relating and adapting to their host culture, multiculturalism often raises debates about the contours and contents of Canadian norms and culture with its associated sense of discomfort, particularly when it comes to defining more precisely some of the shared values, representations and practices that could be considered key to such a national culture (for a review of recurring critiques see McAndrew et al.). A related line of debate raises the idea that Canadian multiculturalism has often translated into the "ghettoisation" of cultural communities, as a general critique on government policies encouraging isolation more than interaction between cultural groups and communities (Bissoondath). Central to the critiques of multiculturalism are the core ideas that it mostly describes diversity as the amalgamation of diverse communities, or that it tends to favor the distance between these.

Distinct from what is generally meant by multiculturalism, a transcultural framework can suggest sensitizing public policies to maintain their focus on respecting diversity, while diverting their current support for the cultivation of difference towards the targeting of greater relational proximity between cultural communities and groups. Conversely – and if one defines multicul-turalism as mostly describing a state of cultural pluralism, for which specific public policies are designed – transculturality adds normative directions in which such policies could be framed. Examples of such policies are numerous, starting with public support for the arts and culture, or urban development, with research projects such as that of McDonald in which she discusses museum exhibitions in multicultural societies, in their role of reinforcing a sense of transcultur-ality by replacing artistic pieces representing cultural communities as separate and different with works highlighting connectedness and co-production of cultural artifacts among communities. Other examples in urban development include the presentation by Chang of public park land-scaping projects in multicultural neighborhoods, in which the designer, applying a transcultural lens, needs great familiarity with the cultural demographics of the locality in order to create a public space that can be shared by all regardless of cultural distinctions in terms of how green spaces are normally used by each community (e.g. for dog-walking, jogging, tai-chi practice, folk-loric dance rehearsals, meditation or family gathering, etc.). In both cases, a transcultural lens opens a discussion about defining some of the common grounds between allegedly different cultures, and encouraging greater connectedness by supporting practice in public settings that invites greater proximity between them.

A third term of crucial importance in the literature is that of interculturality. In the Canadian case, multiculturalism has been perceived by some as a political attempt to dissolve Quebec's sense of a distinct culture in the larger national pot. Instead, political commentators and scholars have emphasized the need for Quebec to develop its own government policies on cultural diversity. In many cases, this term has been used with the meaning of interculturality, or support for cultural diversity not precluding the defense of Quebecois culture, often via the defense of French as the primary language in the province (on the topic of interculturality as an alternative to Canadian *multiculturalism*, in particular refer to the research of Will Kymlicka. Interculturality has also come to account for the relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, or rather, between a francophone minority population of Catholic heritage, and an Anglophone majority of protestant origins. Currently, interculturality is mostly used to illustrate the relationship between the Quebe-cois of French ancestry and expression, and the rest of the country's population, including Anglo-

phones, aboriginals and immigrants. As in the case of Latin Americans, the term interculturality is often used to express the right to difference in relations of a dualistic nature between minorities or marginalized cultures and the dominant culture represented by the majority, relations which his-torically have tended to be of tense or conflictive nature. In the Latin American case, however, we find that and in spite of posing itself as the dominant referent, often this dominant culture is not necessarily represented in demographic terms. Hence, interculturality can be mostly understood as a qualifier in relations between groups, communities and nations that perceive themselves as culturally distinct collectivities, expressing the need to defend and to cultivate their right to dif-ference (as proposed by Daniel Mato in this book). Defined in this way, the terms aptly apply to cases of historical struggles led by national minorities or marginalized collectivities on the basis of their distinct linguistic, ethnic, racial or religious sense of shared identity.

What is key to the term of interculturality is also the premise that the cultures in interaction are discrete systems of their own, historically held separate – as is the case in North American Indian reserves – or distinguished from one another along racial, linguistic or ethnic lines, as tends to be the case for Latin American indigenous people. Interculturality, in short, reinforces the idea of cul-ture boundedness and difference, emphasizing distinctions *between* cultures, more than highlight-ing "porosity", commonalities or connectedness across cultures in close contact. This vision can be highlighted as resting on a particular understanding of culture inherited from classical anthropol-ogy, which posits cultures as largely independent "systems" or "entities" of norms, rules, significations and practices proper to specific collectivities, with isolated communities of native or tribal people of the developing Third World countries being the preferred case studies (a leading proponent of this view is Bronislaw Malinowski). While only partially adequate (because absolute isolation of human settlements tends to be exceptional while sustained contact between collectivities through trade, alliances, conflict or migration is the norm), the conventional understanding of culture viewed as discrete units is even more untenable when it comes to studying modern societies in which cultural diversity means more permanent contact, exchanges, and transformations of a more complex na-ture than interculturality seems to suggest with its greater focus on what is distinct and separated.

While divisions between cultures could be argued as a particular vision not always supported by historical or more current sociological evidence, the right to difference expressed by intercul-turality is perhaps less challengeable – at least in the context of the Americas, where respect for diversity, rather than assimilation, has come to be considered one of the preferred current mod-els of State intervention. Conversely, interculturality can be primarily assessed as a very useful concept for precise situations involving questions of the right to difference – or social struggles expressive of such right to difference – in given communities and collectivities.

Central to the concept of interculturality is the view that cultures are distinctive entities, yet their relationship can often be of conflictive in nature. This view is not only partial; it can also lead to viewing the world as a dangerous place where latent conflict and more open violence are inevitable. By comparison, transculturality clearly differs in that, first, it does not necessarily hold cultures as distinct entities under an "us/them" dichotomy, and second, it doesn't emphasize conflict or tension so much as relationality, connectedness and understandings that can be po-tentially shared across cultures and viewed as increasingly proximate. Transculturality does not presume that conflict across cultures does not exist, but rather stresses a more dialogical view where conflict and cooperation, difference and similarities, misunderstandings and understand-ings are viewed as part of the fuller picture of cultural interactions. The two concepts designate different cultural processes, but more importantly, perhaps, they also reflect theoretical premises about how culture is defined which can be considered widely divergent. To use a visual metaphor, they offer distinct lenses of varying contrast and degree from which the world is observed: a binary view, emphasizing opposites and differences; and a kaleidoscopic view, encompassing the whole, as well as connectedness and sharedness. To continue with the metaphor of the camera

lens, the first view is highly contrasted and clear, while the second is blurry – yet more precise as it reveals many details and gradations not captured by the first lens.

To illustrate this, several examples of a transcultural reading of seemingly intercultural situations could be given. The case of Quebec is often presented as one of the leading cases of a national minority historically struggling against the leading majority for the right to its distinct culture, as well as being a regional majority (demographically speaking) historically struggling in its own territory to defend its right to protect and cultivate a distinct culture, starting with French as the main language to be used in the province. However, less often raised is the fact that Quebecois culture itself is largely the historical product of ethnic miscegenation between native and French populations, together with the inherent flow of migrants of increasingly diversified origins, with Southern European settlers being counted among the oldest of immigrant communities. As discussed in great detail by van Schendel in this book, the figure of the "métisse" (or "mixed-race" in Khoo's terms) is central to properly defining Quebec's culture in its origins. Here, a transcultural lens would situate Quebec's struggle for a distinct culture as antagonistic in its national framework (as does an intercultural reading); however, it would stress the mixed nature of the province's ethnic composition as well, both in origins and timelessness, hence rendering more complex the discussion about Quebecois cultural identity beyond essentializing or dualizing terms, and potentially rendering some of the current public debates about Quebec's cultural identity more inclusive and compelling.[1]

Other examples include the close examination of national cultures as constructs, as in the case of the study of musical genres deemed expressive of a given national culture (see, for instance, the collection by Steingress, an important work of ethno-musicology analyzing music genres from around the world). Among other examples, flamenco or reggae – often perceived as quintessentially Spanish or Jamaican – are cases in point. Neither musical genre originally had much to do with "Spanishness" or "Jamaicanness", but with the varied influences of mostly marginalized groups, such as Indo-European Gypsies in Spain, or socially excluded rude boys from Kingston's ghettos performing new sounds using U.S. imported tunes. Neither musical genre was ever particularly valorized as the central actor of a national culture; cultural production, however, was soon to perceive them as expressions of a national cultural identity. In either case, a concept such as transculturality would lay emphasis on the multi-connectedness of cultural practice within and beyond national territories, which certainly would complicate once again the discussion about defining cultures as separate, bounded entities, while problematizing what national cultures really are, by including – rather than excluding difference. Examples of these complications abound, including the use of interculturality to qualify the relationship between indigenous people of the Western hemisphere and the non-indigenous population, which can often obscure the fact that many countries of the hemisphere encompass a highly mixed population in which dualistic distinctions are not always easy to establish. Similarly, the reading of the interaction between indigenous and non-indigenous people as solely intercultural can tend to over-emphasize difference and historical clash, while missing the fact that some overlap is occurring and has occurred; this is the case, for instance, with the appropriation of some Catholic saints and Biblical myths in indigenous religious practices, precisely because they were not always viewed as alien to them, and because these appropriations allowed for spiritual survival strategies that were of a transcultural nature (see Lafaye and the chapter by Dot Tuer in this volume). What these different examples show, in short, is that a term such as interculturality does not always capture the great complexity of cultures – how they can change or intermingle – as much as it tends to reduce the lens to a contrasted and often antagonistic view of the other as separate, distinct, and certainly, threatening.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have attempted to establish transculturality as an alternate concept to that of transculturation, multiculturalism and interculturality, the latter being a rather distinct concept, which does not need to substitute all others, but rather be considered as an additional conceptual tool, to finely capture cultural situations and processes not adequately

captured by the former. I have argued for the most part that transculturation is a useful term for qualifying historically sedimented configurations of power relations between dominant and subordinate groups. I have defined multiculturalism as a term describing given state policies for managing cultural diversity under the scheme of the right to difference; and interculturality as a term aptly qualifying the more dualistic and antagonistic relationship between groups, communities and nations that perceive themselves as culturally distinct from the other and struggling for that distinction. In all three cases, transculturality was discussed as a separate concept which cannot be absorbed by any of the others because it designates social and cultural processes not adequately captured by these, and also because the concept stems from theoretical perspectives viewing cultures as relational webs, rather than separate or dualistic entities (e.g., self-contained "systems" or "worlds"). Hence, the central point is that transculturality could contribute to thickening these other concepts. More importantly, however, it designates differences for which a distinct and more specific term may be needed. After considering what the concept might not be, I now wish to turn to examining more closely what transculturality means from the body of literature in which the term is employed.

THREE VIEWS ON TRANSCULTURALITY

Central to the use of the notion of transculturality is the heightened inter-disciplinary landscape in which many authors inscribe their work. Far from constituting a concept exclusive to one particular field of study, it is a flexible concept used for a range of purposes by a large array of disciplines, including psychiatry, nursing, business and management studies, urban design, visual arts, ethnomusicology, international relations, anthropology, literature, philosophy and sociology among the leading disciplines. Also striking is the fact that the term is used merely as a synonym by the authors who employ it; for many authors, it is a neologism that could be easily substituted by "cross-cultural", while for others it designates rather distinct processes, not only cutting across cultures but going beyond them, based on the premise that it is difficult to sharply isolate cultures from one another. Below I will present a typology of existing approaches using the term transculturality which will help clarify its use and usefulness in current research, proposing to regroup the vast body of literature on this concept under the three tendential poles of essentialism, relativism/universalism, and pluralism.

Essentialism

A first group of authors follows Caribbean writer Patrick Chamoiseau, for whom transculturality is the passage of cultural currents in time and space, and cultural currents themselves are composed of the "correlation and inter-retro-action of distinct imaginaries".[2] This conception can be deemed mildly essentialist in that, in spite of highlighting the constitutive plurality of the cultural currents examined ("inter-retro-action"), it also speaks of a cohesive force by using the term "current", which suggests strength and directionality (one is *in* the current, or *out* of the current, but rarely in-between). It tends to designate the coherence of certain traits, beliefs, and practices that transcend geography or history, as is the case for diasporic populations, or populations of any given ethnic ancestry that define themselves under the shared umbrella of a collective identity that is not always territorially ascribed. Chamoiseau applies this concept to the idea of "créolité" (creoleness), a cultural identity mostly associated with francophone West Indians of African ancestry, and which may sometimes be ascribed to communities around the world of African origins established through slavery, and having developed a hybrid expression of their own within the idiom and practice of the dominant culture. Chamoiseau specifically illustrates this process through his fascination with the wealth of local vernacular language and expressions in the French of Martinique. Expressive of a collective imaginary, he explores these ideas in several novels, including *Texaco*, and in essays of a more sociological nature such as "Éloge de la créolité". Chamoiseau's conception of

transculturality as the ability of a given number of cultural identities to transcend time or space – however plural they may be – is particular to the field in that it invites examination of the specificity or distinctiveness of these composite identities in order to better understand their capacity for cohering and sustaining themselves. A similar perspective can be associated with scholars studying cultural identities which are not territorially bounded. Leading examples in the literature from the Americas are those studies using terms such as *Indianess* or *African-ness* and perhaps some of the literature on *Americanness*, all of which tend to propose the existence of core traits that constitute the essence of a given collectivity. In this particular use, and by extension, transculturality refers to the varying degrees of capacity of given cultures viewed as cohesive and distinctive frameworks of meanings and practices, spanning across time, migrating across space, and adapting themselves to new contexts, yet retaining their distinctive traits. Although the term may not be perfect because authors such as Chamoiseau often characterize these cultural identities as hybrid or highly relational in origin but currently stable, the perspective can be viewed as *essentialism*.

Relativism and Universalism

A second body of literature views transculturality as the possibility for identifying clusters of significance and practices that are similar across cultures. It is also identified as the need for cautiously understanding the differences between cultures when studying a given phenomenon in a multicultural context. The first tendency can be viewed as universalist, while the second builds more on the premises of relativism. Both orientations have much to do with interdisciplinary dialogues involving anthropology and cultural studies, along with studies in health, education and social work. For the most part they also discuss transculturality as what cuts across cultures and can be considered alike.[3]

In particular, scholars in psychiatry and psychology have pioneered the use of the term transculturality with the establishment of a "transcultural psychiatry" movement in the 1950s,[4] studying the currency of mental diseases across cultures, and concerning themselves with discussions on whether certain core diseases have existed in all cultures, or if illnesses and their symptoms have tended to be culturally specific (see the excellent historiography provided by Bains as well as the discussion of Western-centrism in the development of psychology by Pewzner-Apeloig.[5] The first tendency has sought to establish the universal nature of diseases as biological entities, regardless of their symptoms – mostly accepted as varying across cultures – which could help develop an international chart of mental diseases useful to health professionals around the world. The second tendency has emphasized the culturally specific nature of mental illnesses, in which culture not only is viewed as shaping illness but also as controlling the specific manner in which we conceive of it, name it and treat it (Pewzner-Apeloig; Bains).

Beyond the conceptual debate, both tendencies have opened the way for culturally sensitizing mental, and more generally, physical health practice to non-Western understanding of illness (thus seeking either to define treatments that are universally valid – regardless of cultural contexts or variations in symptoms – or to examine and appropriately treat illnesses with greater attention to patients' cultural or ethnic background, without applying Western medical concepts to non-Western cultures and experiences with illness). The second tendency, in particular, has been influential in English and American psychiatry – as well as in general health practices – with the establishment of transcultural health societies and institutes sensitive to addressing race biases in the treatment of ethnic and racial minorities; for instance, researchers showed that members of ethnic minorities were disproportionally "psychiatrized" and diagnosed as schizophrenic. A non-racist, transcultural approach specifically addressed the fact that universalizing conceptions of illness could distort the diagnoses and treatment of illnesses that could be otherwise understood and treated if practitioners were more competent in understanding their patients' cultural backgrounds, including race, language and spiritual/religious beliefs.

Beyond the fascinating debates and conversations regarding human health and illness from a culturally sensitive perspective – and whether symptoms, diagnoses and treatments could be universal or highly relativized – transcultural psychiatry and health studies opened up a series of rather interesting directions for the study of multicultural societies. Among these is the current research in international relations on the possibilities of articulating "transcultural understandings" in global justice frameworks (Clark); the research in cultural philosophy on the possibilities of establishing a *metalanguage* expressive of common knowledge or meaning across cultures;[6] research in business studies on developing cultural skills and strategies allowing workers and businesses to perform and competently interact within multicultural environments, including foreign culture environments (Elashmawi and Harris; Gatley and Lessen), research in urban studies and design on landscaping public spaces that are adaptable to a diversity of cultural practices and contexts (Chang); and research in social work and popular education on transcultural mediation with immigrant families and communities in legal hardship (Latour). However, this line of literature is similar to its predecessors in psychiatric studies, in which transculturality is generally understood as a close equivalent to "cross-cultural", which is often limited to identifying core practices and understandings that potentially cut across cultures in their universalistic tendencies, or practices advocating culturally sensitive social or professional interventions, while taking into greater account diversity and difference across groups and communities in their relativist orientations. As compared to the first essentialist perspective emphasizing transculturality as the passage or the crystallization of cultural currents, this second unversalist/relativist perspective offers a second possible lens on transculturality as the potential and limitations of identifying phenomena cutting across cultures.

Pluralism

The third body of literature on transculturality can be termed 'pluralism'. It views transculturality not so much as the passage of given cultural currents or as identifying whether some core understandings and practices cut across cultures as a fluid, transformative process stemming from cultural diversity in which people and communities no longer perceive themselves as one single culture. Central to this third perspective on transculturality is the view that cultures are not entirely stable or always clearly distinct from one another, and where, as an alternative to the dualizing and more antagonistic view suggested by a term such as interculturality, there is a particular emphasis on the "transformability" of a culture to its entrenched and related form.

The Africanist, Jacky Bouju defines transculturality as "la reconnaissance réciproque d'un univers de significations partagées" [the reciprocal recognition of a universe of shared meanings] (2). This conception not only points towards the possibility of cross-cultural understandings – as does the universalist view on transculturality – but more importantly, it questions the separateness of cultures that were socially and historically constructed as different for the sake of nation-building, and the legitimation of colonial rule. Bouju shows, through a study of Mali's Dogons – often held in anthropological literature as an archetype of traditional African culture – that Dogons were never isolated from neighboring communities and groups, whether because of trade, alliances or confrontation, and that the very sense of "tradition" was developed in constant interaction with surrounding groups and communities. This view, in short, mainly emphasizes the relatedness of cultures, arguing the inadequacy of viewing them as isolated islands, having developed autonomous systems of signification posed as frontiers between the "us" and the rest.

Relatedness is at the center of transculturality viewed under a pluralistic lens. Using the term within a global contemporary framework, philosopher Wolfgang Welsh defines transculturality as the "consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures [...], which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another" (197). It furthermore designates "the entanglement with new realities and the validation of new, hybridized worldviews [which] usually have

the consequence of unsettling hitherto stable or monolithic identities" (101). What is central to this perspective is the idea that transculturality allows for the illustration of these composite identities and social interactions that complicate the view of culture as monolithic and set within clear boundaries. In addition, the character of contemporaneity of transculturality is emphasized. It is a fluid and dialogical process of cultural construction – particularly more visible in the current era of globalization – where individuals, groups and communities from differing cultural backgrounds are in more continuous contact in their daily transactions.

Also important to this view, is the idea similarly developed by Welsh from a post-modernist stance, or a cosmopolitan liberalist position such as that expressed in Hannertz and Beck, that in current times, individuals and communities are developing the competence to continuously shift between cultural flows and worlds and compose a new sense of self that is not monoculturally ascribed. This can be the case for second and third generation immigrants – such as Chicanos in the United States – who do not recognize themselves as entirely Mexican or as entirely American, where no more than a hyphen exists between the two; or in the case of Peruvians of Chinese ancestry who feel at ease with both Andean and Asiatic heritages; communities living in border zones between countries, or mixed linguistic communities such as Franco-Ontarians in Canada. The preceding are examples of individuals living in global locations continuously exposed to a variety of cultures; and, more generally, people who have come to develop a practical or imaginary sense of home-ness in the world and world-ness at home, who can no longer entirely recognize themselves in a single national or ethnic culture (as specifically explored by Patrick Imbert in this volume).

Similarly, transculturality can also be used to qualify cultural production in music, literature, food, film, clothing, and, more generally, in works of art that compose the bringing together of materials from differing cultures to create new shapes, genres and discourses which seek not only to remain significant for the cultures which they are referencing, but also to produce new meanings that can no longer be examined in view of their original components. The music industry (and perhaps even more particularly the world music industry) offers numerous examples of cultural borrowings re-inscribed in a variety of cultural contexts as well as in genres, instruments, techniques, rhythmic and melodic exchanges and transactions between musicians (see some of the excellent work in ethnomusicology on world music as transcultural practice in Steingress or the material of the online journal *Transcultural Music Review*). Their production is not so much a cacophonic world ensemble aggregating sounds from diversified cultural origins as a creative project to rearrange sound materials from around the world, and to develop new musical genres constructed through the cultivation of diversity. The example can be applied to viewing transculturality in sociological terms. The term does not descriptively apply to individuals and communities circulating through compartmentalized cultures and selecting what fits from each, as much as it designates a disposition and an awareness of rearranging one's sense of cultural identity, playing with an expanded repertoire that is neither nationally nor ethnically bounded. In this sense, transculturality is an open-ended project of fluid contours; more than a stable state with fixed attributes, it is a continuous journey with no predictable destination other than that of openness to others.

A few words of conclusion are needed before leaving the reader to explore this book. In this chapter, I have used two main metaphors to illustrate transculturality: a visual one, playing with the degrees of contrast that can be applied to a photograph (the lower the contrast, the higher the detail and gradation in color and form), and a musical one, illustrating the term as a creative project – going beyond the mere assembly of different genres or instruments – to articulate a new musical form of its own logic. I could have continued with biological examples including a discussion on co-evolution as the survival of the fittest – which is cooperative and most adaptable – against the theory of natural selection of the fittest by any means, as competing theories on the survival of species in the animal and vegetal world. In all examples and metaphors lies the core idea that cultures need to be interpretively viewed as interrelated webs of significance in

which individuals can increasingly circulate to make sense of their experiences (following Geertz's invitation to redefine culture as human creation and culture as open-ended "webs'" rather than autonomous "systems"). In all metaphors is also the idea that contrast and conflict are only one view of cultural interaction, and a partial view at that, unless one were to subscribe to Hobbesian perspectives, for which human social life is endless struggle, violence and fear.

Musical, visual or biological metaphors also help in explaining transculturality – in terms that make sense for the non-specialist – precisely because it is a cultural form no longer reserved for the elite or the privileged, of accessing the world and leisurely traveling the globe and choosing whether or not to adapt, adopt or reject. The term suggests that, under global contemporaneity, one no longer needs to travel great distances to experience the world and bring home what pleases while leaving behind what does not. The world can be experienced at home in most of its diversity, without traveling much further than a few blocks, without moving too far away from one's computer, sound system, library or kitchen. Such diversity at home and in the world can continue to be viewed as the fragile cohabitation of struggling cultural species, and cultural encounters with otherness as sources of anxiety, tension, or conflict. To be sure, transculturality does not necessarily exclude the possibilities of estrangement and conflict. Rather, it introduces elements of desire and seduction along with these more familiar forms of interaction – including the desire to live in and understand otherness – seduction by such otherness where beyond difference what is sought is to establish a sense of understanding which could reduce the distance with what is perceived as different.

NOTES

1 The most current are the media and popular debates raised around the "Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences" (also known as the Bouchard-Taylor Commission). While welcomed by some for many reasons, among which is the opening of a public space to speak about the "identity malaise" in Quebec, for others, talk about racism in the population or immigration policies has been perceived as biased, and the itinerant Commission – which traveled extensively throughout Quebec for public hearings between 2007 and 2008 – was also the object of heightened criticism, some of it being because it fueled popular expressions of intolerance and ignorance by providing them with a public stage, and because the Commission's final report remained too prudent to bring the debate further than the recognition of existing tensions between francophone Quebecois of white-Catholic ancestry and other immigrant communities, and the praising of interculturality, proposing French as the province's primary language. Full access to the report is available at http://www.accommodements.qc.ca/index-en.html (last consulted June 16, 2008).

2 The expression was used in an interview with Patrick Chamoiseau conducted in the late 1990s by Michael Peterson, 'L'imaginaire de la diversité' available on the website 'Potomitan' a literary site dedicated to the promotion of creole cultures.

3 This view of transculturality as that which transcends cultural frontiers largely corresponds to the definitions provided under the UNESCO, as in Goucha.

4 McGill University pioneered this movement with the establishment in 1956 of a project on Transcultural Research in Mental Health Problems, with its scholarly journal, *Transcultural Psychiatry*. The university still holds a special program in the Faculty of Medicine called the Social and Transcultural Psychiatry Division. See http://www.mcgill.ca/tcpsych/ (last accessed May 1, 2008)

5 Pewzner-Apeloig highlights, for instance, that depression is experienced and understood differently in Black Africa and the Western World. For the former it tends to be associated with a persecution complex, for the latter, with a sense of culpability. A similar argument is made by Pradelle de la Tour describing a project of transcultural mediation with African immigrant families established in Parisian suburbs, where sons' legal hardships tended to be interpreted as signs of persecution from powerful forces.

6 See, for instance, the ambitious project under the Transcultura International Institute created in 1988 at Bologna University by semiologist Umberto Eco and anthropologist Alain le Pichon, together with African and Chinese scholars; the chief concern of these projects is to develop a "reciprocal anthropology" suspending familiar (Western

European) modes of knowledge in order to better take into account other knowledge modes and to translate those modes into terms that are valid for the cultures of the observed and the observer. For the institute, a transcultural approach is to progressively establish a meta-language - a common corpus of words and key-concepts - in order to better understand conflicts and misunderstandings arising from intercultural encounters. The institute is particularly interested in the cultural relations between Europeans and non-Europeans: "to answer the growing demand for reciprocal knowledge between cultures". Here the term transcultural seems not only a substitute for cross-cultural, but is also suggestive of the core differences between the cultures studied (European/Non-European). Hence, one of the institute's goals is to establish transcultural methodological frameworks - understood as universal - which would cut across intercultural situations or relations. See http://transcultura.jura.uni-sb.de (last accessed June 15, 2008)

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